MOGU, THE WANDERER

MOGU THE WANDERER

OR

THE DESERT

A FANTASTIC COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

PADRAIC COLUM

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TO

THE AUTHOR OF "KING ARGIMĒNĒS AND THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR," "THE GODS OF THE MOUNTAIN" AND "KING ALEXANDER"

MOGU THE WANDERER

CHARACTERS

The Crier of the Camp.
Selim the Sentinel.
The Four Ass-tenders.
Mogu the Wanderer.
Hafiz the Hashish-eater.
Chosroes, the King of Persia.
Nuseyr, the Court Poet.
Helenus, the Roman Ambassador.
Narjis, Mogu's Daughter.
Shedad and Shedid, the Court Chamberlains.
The Fruit-seller.
The Old Man of the Desert.
Kassim-Farraj, the Historiographer of the Vizier.
Moon-of-Love and Food-of-Hearts, two Slave Girls.
The Little Flower Maid.
Persian Notables (3).
Guards (2).
King Artavades.
A Spy.
Gazeleh, a Woman of the King's Harem.
Ishak and Shakalik, the Nose-cutters of the Court.
Yunan, Duban, Zahal } Three Ethiopian Captives.
Menander, the Secretary of the Roman Embassy.
Prince Pharanices, the King's Son.
Queen Atossa.
Sparimixes, the Attendant of the Birds.
Zamm, the One-eyed Beggar.

The action passes on the fringe of a desert that is the frontier of the Roman and Persian Empires.

MOGU, THE WANDERER

THE FIRST ACT

There is a well in Center. Back there are huge stones that may be from ruins. Behind these stones the desert itself stretches away.

It is morning. At Right, with his back to a stone, Selim the Sentinel is asleep, a spear beside him. The Crier of the Camp, a huge rattle in his hand, bounds from back Left.

THE CRIER OF THE CAMP (*swinging his rattle round on its handle*)

Our Master makes peace with the Romans! Our Master makes peace with the Romans! (*He stands before the sleeping sentinel and makes a louder noise with his rattle*) Chosroes, the King of the Persians, makes peace with the Romans!

SELIM (*waking up*)

I hear. Fare on with your tidings, O Crier of the Camp.

[*The Crier runs out R., twirling his rattle and crying,* "Our Master makes peace with the Romans! Chosroes makes peace with the Romans!" *Four ass-tenders come from L.*

FIRST ASS-TENDER

O Selim, is it true what is being cried through the camp — that our Master makes peace with the Romans?

SELIM

I tell you it is a surety.

SECOND ASS-TENDER

And shall we return to our own land, Selim?

SELIM

As for that, ask the soothsayers.

SECOND ASS-TENDER

A man has come into the camp — a man who can foretell events.

THIRD ASS-TENDER

I know the man you mean. He is a pilferer. He was caught stealing in the camp.

FIRST ASS-TENDER

Yea. And the marks of a beating are upon his body.

SECOND ASS-TENDER

Yet he has most quick and searching eyes.

[*A man has stolen round the wall of the well. He stretches out his staff and draws melon peel that is lying on the ground towards him. He picks up the melon peel and begins to eat it. The man is naked except for a loin cloth; he is tall and lean and has a scanty beard and quick, searching eyes.*

THE MAN (*coming forward*)

A fair and friendly greeting to you all, O Brothers of the Persians.

SECOND ASS-TENDER

It is the soothsayer with the marks of the beating.

SELIM

Who are you, O Man?

THE MAN

I am Mogu, the Wanderer, the possessor of the Book.

SECOND ASS-TENDER

Do you not foretell events?

MOGU

Young man, I read in the Book.

SELIM

And what is this Book?

MOGU

It is the Book of the Hidden Treasures, my Lord. I look at you, and I see that divers fortunes overhang you all. You, young man, have been beaten once, and, I fear, will be beaten again, for there is hatred to the right of you and hatred to the left of you.

THIRD ASS-TENDER

He speaks the truth.

MOGU

While as for you, many women have refused you, but in the end they will go to you with alacrity.

FOURTH ASS-TENDER

Is that true, Mogu?

MOGU

I have said it. And as for you, you have lacked money always.

FIRST ASS-TENDER

That is indeed true, Mogu.

MOGU

But the Book says that he who shall persistently follow the smell of the oil shall come to the place where there is light.

SECOND ASS-TENDER

And what of my fortune, Mogu?

MOGU

There is a damsel thinking of you, and she is dark.

SECOND ASS-TENDER

Is there no more than that?

MOGU

I will speak no more of the future. According to the Book there is one occasion on which a man may with

safety reveal the mysteries. That occasion is after he has eaten. It is now time for me to eat. Have any of you seen my daughter?

SECOND ASS-TENDER

I have seen her.

MOGU

She has our provision. But it does not matter. I will eat with you. Let us share provision.

FIRST ASS-TENDER

There is no provision with us, Mogu.

MOGU

A crust of bread itself confers the obligation of bread and salt.

THIRD ASS-TENDER

There is none amongst us that has a crust of bread.

MOGU

This is pitiful. But before I go from you I shall show you a wonder.

[*He pulls up a little bag that has been slung across his back and takes something out of it. He puts the object on the palm of his hand.*

FIRST ASS-TENDER

It is a mouse!

[*Mogu takes something else out of the bag and puts it on his palm.*

FIRST ASS-TENDER

It is a dice-cube!

MOGU

Simsim, my mouse, pushes at this cube and turns it over. Now will he turn it with a high or a low number uppermost? Watch Simsim, my mouse.

FIRST ASS-TENDER

He will turn up a low number.

MOGU

And what stake do you put on that?

FIRST ASS-TENDER

I put no stake.

MOGU

This man has no reliance on his own judgment. And it is such as he that are in charge of the asses of the camp.

THIRD ASS-TENDER

He turns up a high number. I stake a copper coin.

MOGU

Your destiny, if you knew it, is worth more than a copper coin. You have the judgment of Aristotle whom Darius appointed as Vizier to his son Alexander.

SECOND ASS-TENDER

Was Alexander then the son of Darius?

MOGU

The Book itself says that Darius was the father of Alexander. But Simsim will push no more. He has turned up the lowest number. Give me the coin.

THIRD ASS-TENDER

I have no coin to give.

MOGU

What does he say? Look, friends, see how the cube has been turned! This man brings disgrace on you all. Behold, he is going away!

[*The Third Ass-tender goes towards L.*

SECOND ASS-TENDER

Here, Mogu, is one for your skill — Hafiz the Hashish-eater.

[*Hafiz enters from R. His face is white, and he wears a torn robe.*

MOGU

My Master, do you see the mouse and the dice-cube?

HAFIZ

Verily I see them.

MOGU

The mouse pushes the dice-cube. Will he turn up a high or a low number?

HAFIZ

A low number.

MOGU

Good Master, you have lost. It is a six. Recompense me with a copper coin. (*Hafiz gives Mogu a coin*) You are amongst those of whom it is written, "They do not say 'Come another day'; they pay on the stroke." Simsim pushes the cube again.

FOURTH ASS-TENDER

He will turn up a high number.

MOGU

Behold, it is as you have said.

FOURTH ASS-TENDER

Give me the coin.

MOGU

The coin?

THE ASS-TENDERS (*truculently*)

The stake — give him the stake.

MOGU

What lack of mind is here! There was no stake.

THE ASS-TENDERS (*threatening Mogu*)

Give him the coin — give him the coin or we beat you!

MOGU

Would you touch one who possesses the Book and who is acquainted with the incantations?

THE ASS-TENDERS

We will put more stripes on your back.

[*Mogu makes the mouse run up to his shoulder. Then, grasping his staff, he stands with his back to the wall of the well. The ass-tenders threaten him. Chosroes, the King, and Nuseyr, the Court Poet, enter from R.*

CHOSROES

There are contentions here, Nuseyr.

SELIM (*in great alarm*)

The King! The King! Have ye no manners, Outcasts! The King!

[*The ass-tenders run off L. One of them knocks the mouse off Mogu's shoulder. Hafiz goes after the ass-tenders. Mogu throws down his staff and afterwards goes down on his hands and knees to search for the mouse that has run away. Chosroes stands watching him. Chosroes, with his beard and robe, looks like an Assyrian king. Nuseyr, the Court Poet, is a young man elaborately dressed. He has on his shoulder a green parrot held by a silver chain.*

CHOSROES

What man are you?

MOGU (*on his knees*)

I am Mogu, the Wanderer, my Lord. I search for the mouse that was villainously flung from me.

CHOSROES

Have you aught to say?

MOGU

Who is there to judge of the poor man? If he states his case and proves himself wronged, who is there that will admit his plea?

CHOSROES (*to Nuseyr*)

This man has discourse.

MOGU

Alas for the poor man! How could you know his condition! In the market place he is mocked at, and in the street he is set upon and beaten. When he is absent he is not remembered amongst mankind, and when he is present he has no share in their pleasures. He fails to earn his food in the summer, and in the winter he is without fire or food.

CHOSROES

Excellently does he speak.

MOGU

In the market place the poor man shuns notice, and in the desert he pours forth his tears.

NUSEYR

He speaks excellently. I could listen to him only for the wind blows from him to us.

CHOSROES

Yes, the wind blows from him to us. Bid him go away.

[*Nuseyr motions Mogu to go. He goes left of well and sits with back to it. There are some more fruit peels on the ground, and he takes them up and eats them.*

CHOSROES

Did my poet observe that man?

NUSEYR

I observed that he was our old acquaintance, the naked man.

CHOSROES

He is a lesson for those who would be admonished.

NUSEYR

Too obvious a lesson, my Lord. But my parrot has never looked upon his like. (*He steps towards L., holding up the parrot*) Shiraz, my beauty, look on Mogu,

the naked man. So we are all born, Shiraz! So we all are stripped of robe and crown, of court and harem!

CHOSROES

I shall have that parrot strangled, Nuseyr.

NUSEYR

Why, my Lord?

CHOSROES

So that our Roman friends will not gossip of Persian levity.

[*Helenus, the Roman minister, an alert man with great presence, enters from L. He makes reverence to the King.*

CHOSROES

We pray that the peace between our Empires may be eternal. The treaty is written out in Persian and Roman writing, and Shedad, our chamberlain, will hand it to you when we go back to the pavilion. We will present you with a robe of honor, Helenus.

NUSEYR

Let it be on account of his epic, my Lord.

CHOSROES

Has Helenus written an epic?

HELENUS

My epic is only in part composed. As your Majesty is aware, in a long poem the subject is of the first importance. I have selected my subject with the greatest care. It is the war with the Dacians, an action now sufficiently remote to be a fit subject for an epic. The parts composed have been read in various circles, and the readings have always been attended by the best people. It has been noticed how I have surmounted the difficulties of getting barbarian names into Greek hexameters.

CHOSROES

We regret that the subject of the wars between Rome and Persia did not commend itself to you.

HELENUS

There are many fine episodes in these wars, but no complete action, my Lord.

CHOSROES

Nuseyr will explain to me what you have said. Behold the naked man again.

[*Mogu has come from behind well and is searching on the ground for his mouse.*

CHOSROES

Such wanderers have ways of making diversion. Does he sing? Does he tell stories? Does he dance?

NUSEYR

The King commands that Mogu dance.

MOGU

O my Lord, I know only the Ostrich Dance — the dance that amuses the camel-drivers.

NUSEYR

You must dance it, Mogu.

[*Mogu commences the dance — an awkard shuffling and jumping. Chosroes, Nuseyr and Helenus are about to go when Narjis runs in from L.*

NARJIS

O my Father!

CHOSROES

Who is this damsel?

MOGU

She is the Wanderer's child, my Lord.

CHOSROES

Can she dance?

MOGU

She has been trained to dance the Bubble Dance and the Dance of the Butterfly Skipping the Stones.

CHOSROES

What do you say of her, Nuseyr?

NUSEYR

She is quick and graceful, like the daughters of the desert.

CHOSROES

Do you not commend her then?

NUSEYR

I should like to see her dressed in a skirt of red inwoven with gold, and with sandals upon her feet. Her vest should be of pale blue, slashed and open, and embroidered with pearls —

CHOSROES

I had a dream last night!

NUSEYR

Dressed thus she would make a pretty cup-bearer.

CHOSROES

A cup-bearer only!

NUSEYR

What is your name, damsel?

NARJIS

Narjis, my Lord.

NUSEYR

Let these coins be in your hair, Narjis.

NARJIS

O my Lord!

[*She takes a string of coins that Nuseyr hands her and fixes them in her hair.*

CHOSROES

What do you say now of her, Nuseyr?

NUSEYR

I think she is pretty.

CHOSROES

No more than pretty?

NUSEYR

I cannot say that she is more than pretty. The King would have you dance, O Gazelle of the Sand Hills!

[*Shedad and Shedid, the two chamberlains, enter from L. and prostrate themselves. The King is looking at Narjis who stands before him. Mogu is at the wall of the well. Nuseyr and Helenus stand behind the King.*

SHEDAD

The falcons, O King!

CHOSROES

What does the man say?

NUSEYR

What is it, Shedad?

SHEDAD

The falcons that were sent as a present to the King have arrived at the pavilion.

NUSEYR

The falcons! These are the snowy falcons from the Mountain of Lebanon. O my Lord, may we not go to the pavilion at once to see these birds?

CHOSROES

Shall we not see Narjis dance?

NUSEYR

There can be nothing wonderful in her dancing, but the falcons — the snowy falcons! Let us go, my Lord.

CHOSROES

How shall we reward Narjis?

NUSEYR

I have given her a string of coins.

CHOSROES

I have had a dream. But let us go back to the pavilion.

[*Chosroes turns to go. The chamberlains go before him.*

HELENUS

We could have presented Chosroes with falcons from the Western Islands.

NUSEYR

Ah, but snowy falcons, and falcons from the Mountain of Lebanon. Farewell, Gazelle of the Sand Hills!

NARJIS

Farewell, my Lord.

[*Nuseyr and Helenus go after the King.*

NARJIS

They are gone. I remember the words in the song:

I perceive it was only a dream, the thought that came to me,
The thought that the desert was passed, that we were on the couches.
I thought we had dainty food, that singing and wine were around us,
And I thought that my lord had said sweet words to his slave girl.
It was only a dream, I perceive, and the desert is round us.

MOGU

This is our lucky day. This is the day of my life. This shall be called Mogu's day. Coins in a string the juggler with the parrot bestowed upon my daughter.

NARJIS

O my Father, will they return?

MOGU

Let us be far away lest they should. Come on.

NARJIS

The King may remember me.

MOGU

Let us hope that the son of the parrot may not remember his coins. Come on. But give the coins to me that I may place them in obscurity.

NARJIS

O my Father, the King looked upon me when the coins were in my hair. He might return, and not seeing the coins, would not notice me again.

MOGU

What is this? Give the coins lest the soldiers see them. (*Narjis puts her hands over the coins in her hair*) Let us hasten from this, or they will fall upon us and beat us. They would all beat us — the captains, the soldiers, the camp followers. And now indeed we should be careful, for our good fortune must have awakened the jealousy of my evil genius. Come. (*Narjis takes a step to him*) We will go into a town far from the camp. We shall have fowl, fish and white bread. (*Narjis stops*) Come. We shall have wine and entertainment. The jesters and humpbacks will perform before us.

NARJIS

Oh, stay. I hear a call.

MOGU

Then give me the coins.

[*Narjis breaks from Mogu. The King enters from R.*

CHOSROES

Narjis!

NARJIS

O my Lord!

[*She runs to him.*

MOGU

He who has a daughter has distress and anxiety indeed! Behold I am once again under the power of fortune.

[*Hafiz the Hashish-eater enters from L.*

HAFIZ

Hail, Brother!

MOGU

Greeting, Hashish-eater. Cast no spells, have no envious thought, wish not for the evil eye, for the hour of Mogu approaches.

HAFIZ

The hour of my sobriety approaches also.

MOGU

Hush. The King comes with the Wanderer's child.

[*Chosroes with Narjis come from R.*

CHOSROES

Further, according to a dream, I should escape a peril by wedding you.

NARJIS

By wedding me, my Lord!

CHOSROES

Nuseyr, our Court Poet, professes not to find you beautiful, and his opinion on what is lovely is esteemed at the Court. I have slipped away from Nuseyr. I find you fairer than the daughters of kings.

NARJIS

I am my Lord's handmaiden.

CHOSROES

I would wed you as I should wed the daughter of a king.

NARJIS

O my Lord!

[*They go slowly back R. They stop.*

MOGU

O my protecting Genius, thou hast brought me to a fortunate hour! He takes her as he would take the daughter of a King! He weds with Mogu's issue; he makes Mogu the parent of a line of Kings. Stand up and be haughty, Mogu! Be fierce, Mogu! Tremble and be abashed, my enemies! Dogs, lick the dust before Mogu's feet!

HAFIZ

What does your hashish say to you, Mogu?

MOGU

I am making an alliance with the King.

HAFIZ

Are you lending him armies?

MOGU

I am giving my daughter in marriage to the King.

HAFIZ

Are you giving a dowry with your daughter?

MOGU

No. But I am getting a bride-price for my daughter.

HAFIZ

And what bride-price will you get, Mogu?

MOGU

O stupefied one, what bride-price would a King give?

HAFIZ

He will make you a lord of the empire.

MOGU

He will make me the greatest of the lords of the empire. Media will be under me for a year and Bactriana for the year after; Damascus I shall give away, and Yemen shall be my place of pleasure.

HAFIZ

O Mogu, my Lord, a boon!

MOGU

What boon would you crave?

HAFIZ

Give me the women of Yemen to be my slave women.

MOGU

I have nought to do with you, Hashish-eater.

HAFIZ

Then Shedad and Shedid are more generous than you.

MOGU

You speak of the chamberlains whom I hate. Have they daughters?

HAFIZ

Shedad has a daughter, and she is wonderful. There is none like her in the Garden of Eternity.

MOGU

I have never seen the daughters of the rich.

HAFIZ

She is like the moon on the night of its fullness. She will be displayed before you robed in silks of China. Lo, her nurses bring her in. Her eyes are bordered with kohl, and her nails are stained with henna. Lo, they withdraw the veils and the outer garments. Her hair falls out of its tower. Behold the shower of pearls, and see there are jewels along her breast!

MOGU

By my protecting genius, I shall marry this damsel.

HAFIZ

Will you not look upon her?

MOGU

I will wed her, I tell you, but afterwards I will manifest no love towards her on account of the enmity I bear to her father and her uncle.

HAFIZ

Alas for the bride, the poor bride.

MOGU

Mogu will be haughty to his enemies. He will take their daughters for a time, but themselves he will have beaten with sticks.

HAFIZ

Lo, the King goes with the bride.

[*Chosroes and Narjis move away R. Mogu throws down his staff and runs after them.*

MOGU

My Lord, my Lord! Mogu calls, my Lord. Mogu the bride's father. The bride's father entreats a word, even a gift, my Lord.

[*Chosroes and Narjis go off without giving any attention to Mogu. Mogu stands looking after them.*

HAFIZ

Mogu — Mogu — Mogu.

[*Mogu comes back and picks up his staff.*

MOGU

Begone, Slave.

HAFIZ

Art thou not a lord of the empire and friendly to me?

MOGU

My daughter is to wed the King — is it not so?

HAFIZ

You have given your daughter in marriage to the King.

MOGU

Then I shall stay here until the King sends for me.

[*The four ass-tenders come from L. and seat themselves upon stones back left. The Crier of the Camp comes on from R. holding his rattle. Hafiz goes off L. and Mogu stands at C. his staff in his hands in a dignified attitude.*

THE CRIER (*hoarsely, shaking his rattle feebly*)

The King — has made peace — with the Romans.

[*Shedid comes from R.*

MOGU

Have you a message for me, Shedid?

SHEDID

A message for you, Vagabond?

MOGU

Does the King send me a message?

SHEDID

The King! — is it to such a one as thou?

MOGU

Know, O Shedid, that Chosroes has wed my daughter.

SHEDID

Verily truth has departed from amongst men!

[*The ass-tenders and the Crier of the Camp laugh.*

MOGU

Chosroes has wed Narjis, my daughter, as he would wed the daughter of a king.

[*The ass-tenders and the Crier of the Camp are highly diverted.*

SHEDID

What will be done with this man? His forehead is of brass, or else it is of rock, and cut from the threshold of the synagogue of the Jews! He is not ashamed of anything he says to the servants of the King.

[*Shedad enters from R.*

MOGU

It is you who have the message for me, Shedad.

SHEDAD

I do not bear messages to such as you.

MOGU

You have gifts for me, Shedad.

SHEDAD

I have no gifts for you.

MOGU

You have said this by way of discussion, but you have come to bid me to the pavilion of the King.

SHEDID

This man becomes wearisome.

MOGU

You have the coins for me at least.

SHEDAD

I have no coins for you.

MOGU

Speak truth, Shedad.

SHEDAD

Does this man challenge us?

MOGU

Give me the coins and I will stay here.

SHEDAD

I have no coins.

MOGU

You have my daughter's string of coins, I tell you. Give them to me.

SHEDAD

What shall we do with this man, Brother?

MOGU

You have stolen the coins.

SHEDID

I shall have him punished.

MOGU

Give me the coins, ye robbers.

SHEDID

O Ass-tenders! Seize this man, beat him soundly and

place him in the crosspieces. Now let us leave this place, Brother.

[*Shedid and Shedad go off L. The ass-tenders gather round Mogu.*

MOGU (*gripping his staff*)

Beware of touching me, Jackals.

[*The ass-tenders gather round Mogu, mocking him.*

THE CRIER (*as if making a portentous announcement*)

The King has taken Mogu's daughter!

THE ASS-TENDERS

La, la, la, la.

THE CRIER (*twisting his rattle*)

The King has married Mogu's daughter.

THE ASS-TENDERS

La, la, la, la.

THE CRIER

The King has married Mogu's daughter as he would wed the daughters of kings.

THE ASS-TENDERS

La, la, la, la.

MOGU

Listen to what I will say to you. You are dogs, your fathers were dogs, and dogs also were your grandfathers. You are the lice of the camp and with my staff only will I touch you.

THE CRIER (*mounting the stones back*)

All ye who would see a vagabond beaten come here, come here, come here.

[*The ass-tenders crowd round Mogu. He strikes at them. One throws sand in his eyes. They throw him down. They put him in the crosspieces.*

THE CRIER

May all the hungry bellies that come into our camp meet the fate of Mogu, the Vagabond.

[*The normal life of the camp goes on. People come to the well. A fruit-seller comes. Fruit is taken by those at the well. People at well go away. Selim and the fruit-seller play at draughts. Mogu is in the crosspieces L. C. He is standing upright, but his arms are held between two cross timbers and his neck is bent under a board.*

Hafiz the Hashish-eater enters from L.

HAFIZ

How strange is the scene on which my soul gazes!

SELIM (*mockingly*)

O Fruit-seller, how strange is the well and the camel track!

HAFIZ

The powers of Alexander were gathered here, and below the rubbish heaps are the remains of Babylon.

SELIM (*with interest*)

When were the armies of Alexander gathered round this place?

HAFIZ

A thousand years after the revel of Sardanapalus.

[*The Fruit-seller runs to Hafiz, holding his basket on his head.*

THE FRUIT-SELLER

Speak to me concerning Sardanapalus.

HAFIZ

Below one of the rubbish heaps is a painted chamber, and there Sardanapalus reveled on a night. A slave called me out of sleep and caught me by the hand, and we went down long stairs. I heard the voices of

the singing women. I knew the King was dead, and that those within would make me king after Sardanapalus. But the door would not open.

[*The Fruit-seller looks round at Selim.*

SELIM

Speak to me concerning Alexander.

HAFIZ

I sat by Alexander's couch and told him about India, for I had journeyed down all her rivers. I slept outside his tent, and a captain called to me. The blue lotos was in my hand, and I went to show Alexander the veins that led into the heart of the world. Then a star fell. I heard them say that Alexander had gone hence.

SELIM

He is a hashish-eater. I knew such a one in Ispahan.

THE FRUIT-SELLER

There is no profit in listening to the dreams of a hashish-eater.

HAFIZ

I will speak no more concerning Sardanapalus nor Alexander.

[*He goes off R. Selim sits on a low stone R., eating dates and throwing the stones before him. The Fruit-seller dusts the fruit in his basket. Mogu begins to utter deep groans.*

SELIM

Were I back in Ispahan I would be well off. My father is a merchant and chief amongst the merchants of the city. He has many bales in his shop, and I think the price of each is a thousand pieces of gold. My father would be glad to see my countenance. He would give me bales to trade with.

THE FRUIT-SELLER

There is great wealth in a thousand pieces of gold.

SELIM

And when I had returned from trading with the bales he had given me, my father would take me to the house of my uncle who is also a merchant and wealthy and ask his brother's daughter in marriage for me. Verily we would not leave the shop until my uncle's daughter was given to me.

THE FRUIT-SELLER

And a share of your uncle's wealth should go with the damsel.

SELIM

That would be but proper. Then I would be a great merchant myself and would have many slaves and much ease. Would that I were back in Ispahan.

MOGU

O Ispahan!

SELIM

Art thou acquainted with the Beautiful City, Mogu?

MOGU

Behold these feet! Were I to deny their acquaintance with the streets of Ispahan, the nails would drop off the toes. O Ispahan! O City where she who is remembered lived and died!

SELIM

You refer to Sheereen the Beautiful?

MOGU

To Sheereen and to none other.

SELIM

Then the stories told in the streets of Ispahan are familiar to you?

MOGU

Master, they are my particularly familiar tales.

SELIM

O Fruit-seller, bring your basket to me, and as I eat more dates I may question Mogu about the stories of Ispahan.

[*The Fruit-seller brings over the basket to Selim.*

SELIM

And so they are familiar to you, Mogu — the stories of Ispahan?

MOGU

It would not be necessary for me to bury my neck in the collar of reflection to recall the stories of Ispahan. No, indeed. But that which presses my neck is not of reflection, but of torment. I pray you, loosen it, Master. (*He twists his neck around*) Now that I look upon you, I perceive that you are from Ispahan indeed. Your bearing is comely and noble and like that of the youths of Ispahan.

[*Selim goes over and opens the board around Mogu's neck. Mogu lifts his head and breathes deeply.*

MOGU

O ravenous belly, cease to prey upon me, so that I may remember the choicest of the stories and relate them to this friendly noble.

SELIM

O Fruit-seller, give Mogu to eat, and I will recompense you.

[*The Fruit-seller goes to Mogu.*

MOGU

The hand is the servant of the mouth, Master.

[*Selim releases Mogu's right hand. He takes dates*

from the Fruit-seller and eats. The ass-tenders have come on from R. and they stand behind Selim.

SELIM

Mogu is about to relate to us the story of Sheereen the Beautiful.

MOGU

There are three preventatives to the telling of that story: it must not be related before women, nor before black slaves, nor in the presence of those who pay not their debts.

SELIM

O Mogu, are there such here?

MOGU

Behind you are those who have not paid their debts.

FIRST ASS-TENDER

He knows nought of the story.

SELIM

O Mogu, are you an imposter in this also?

MOGU

Not so. But those who are behind you would use what I say in the story against me.

THE FRUIT-SELLER

I know one of the familiar stories of Ispahan. It is the story of the Slave and the Sultan. Do you know that story, Mogu?

MOGU

The story of the Slave and the Sultan — I know it. It is a story worthy to be engraved on plates of gold and kept in the treasure house of a king. There was a King of Yemen so anxious to possess the story of the Slave and the Sultan that he sent messengers into the cities of China to converse with travelers of the world, so that the messengers might, perchance, meet one

who carried in his mind the story of the Slave and the Sultan.

SELIM

Yes, Mogu. But what of the story?

THE ASS-TENDERS

What of the story?

THE FRUIT-SELLER

O Mogu, what of the story of the Slave and the Sultan?

MOGU

To proceed. There was once a Sultan, and he had in his house a favorite slave.

SELIM

Nay, Mogu. There was once a Sultan, and he had in his house one who was the most despicable of slaves.

THE FRUIT-SELLER

So it is. That is how the story begins.

MOGU

I will let my master relate the story in the way that is most pleasing to himself.

SELIM

Hear me, my Friends, and give heed to the story of the Slave and the Sultan. There was once a sultan and he had in his palace one who was the most despicable of slaves. Now it came to the ear of the sultan that this slave dreamt he sat in his master's seat. So, to divert himself, the sultan caused a drug to be placed in the slave's food, and while he slept, they arrayed him in the robes of the sultan and put him on the master's seat. (*The audience approves of the tale. While they are applauding, Shedad and Shedid enter L. They have Nuseyr with them, and they point out Mogu to Nuseyr*) So when this most despicable of slaves awakened on the world, he was saluted as Sultan. And one courtier

would make obeisance to him and say, "The slave girl my Lord directed to be brought hath arrived, and the broker swears that the ten thousand pieces of gold do not suffice to pay for the dress and the ornaments she has on." (*The audience laugh heartily. Selim pauses to laugh*) And another courtier would say, "Presents from the King of India have arrived! Will my Lord deign to cast an eye upon them?" (*Selim laughs immoderately. The audience, carried away, laugh*) At last this most despicable of slaves was persuaded that he was Sultan, and he gave orders, and for a time these orders were carried out. But the courtiers at last grew weary of this diversion, and one said, "O thou unlucky," and plucked the beard of the slave. Then they fell upon him and tormented him, and at last they yoked him to the mill as a bull, and forced him to grind corn for a night and a day. (*Selim and the audience laugh again*) O Mogu, now you know the story of the Slave and the Sultan.

MOGU

Yea, verily. (*Selim and the story-telling group now see Shedad and the others. Shedad motions to Selim. He goes to the chamberlains and Nuseyr, who speak to him. Selim motions to the camp followers to go away. He unloosens Mogu's other hand and then goes off. Mogu gets away from the crosspieces and stands C., rubbing his legs. Shedad and Shedid go to him. They make reverence*) Why do you stand before me, Oppressors of the Poor?

SHEDID

We bring you tidings of your elevation, O Vizier. Your Lordship has been given the place of Perozes, the Vizier.

SHEDAD

We come to bid you to the banquet of the King.

MOGU

Your beards are gray, and yet you are prolific in deceit. The desert will deliver me from your hands.

[*He goes L.*

NUSEYR (*coming to him*)

Speak to us, Lord Mogu, and tell us why you would go hence.

MOGU

Because they would pretend that Mogu, the vagabond, was Vizier and amongst the noble, and because, when they had grown weary of that diversion, they would have him beaten and tormented. I know you all take pleasure in mocking the outcast, but had I not listened to the stories I should most assuredly have been taken in the net. O my Lord Nuseyr, do not be amongst the mockers! Have pity upon the poor man! You know not his condition, as I said. I go back to the desert without crust, without coin, without daughter. The sun has burnt the flesh off my neck and even now it is on the stripes of my beating. My stomach devours itself for lack of food.

NUSEYR

What would you have of me, Mogu?

MOGU

Some fruit for my journey, Lord.

[*Nuseyr calls to the Fruit-seller. He comes from R.*

NUSEYR

Leave your basket before Mogu, and for what he takes I will recompense you.

[*The Fruit-seller puts basket down and goes off R. Mogu takes fruit out of basket, and bites into one.*

MOGU

Verily, this is an astonishing thing!

NUSEYR

What is it, Lord Mogu?

MOGU

It is an event to astonish the mind.

[*He holds something. Shedad looks into his hand.*

SHEDAD

There were two stones in the Vizier's fruit.

SHEDID

One of them is small and wrinkled as if dried in the desert, and the other is large and purple like a grape.

MOGU

I am astonished at the event of the fruit.

NUSEYR

May it not be that these stones are an omen, and that they signify the two parts of the Vizier's life — the one contracted and discolored, the other full and richly hued? (*Shedad and Shedid make assenting gestures*) Drink to the omen, Lord Mogu. Wine for the Vizier, Chamberlains.

[*Shedad and Shedid hurry to L. and come back with a great cup filled with wine.*

MOGU

I am astonished at the event of the fruit. Have you ever heard of a happening more extraordinary?

NUSEYR

Drink to the happening. This is the King's wine — wine of Cyprus. This is the Beauty amongst Ten Thousand and the Virgin long kept at Home.

MOGU

O my Lord, I have heard that the King's wine is sometimes drugged.

NUSEYR

Permit me first to drink from your cup. (*Nuseyr drinks*) Now, my Lord Mogu, consider this. If this wine has been drugged and if you drink of it and become insensible, you cannot be deceived on your awakening, for you are aware of the game already.

MOGU

It is true what you say, my Lord. I cannot be deceived since I am aware of the game already. (*He drinks*) I had heard of the wine of Cyprus. It is good wine, my Lord — this wine of Cyprus. Do not think I am without manners. I know how to behave in the presence of the noble. I drink to you, my Lord.

[*Mogu drinks again.*

SHEDAD

The King expects that the Vizier will keep the cup he has sent him.

MOGU (*in dismay*)

Now I see again your design against me. You would have me taken with the King's cup in my possession! You would bring me into torment with this cup. (*He leaves the cup on the ground and retreats from it*) I will go from this place where the poor man is tricked into giving himself up to torment.

[*A light litter is brought in from L. It is opened, and Narjis, veiled, steps out.*

NARJIS

O my Father, how wretched you seem.

MOGU

It is my daughter's voice.

[*She lifts her veil and goes towards him.*

MOGU

My daughter! But you consort with those whose diversion it is to torment the outcast.

NARJIS

Good fortune has turned your brain, my Father.

MOGU

Do not speak of good fortune. Evil are the things that are projected against me. But I am wary, my Daughter.

NARJIS

I recalled you to the King, and he has bestowed upon you the place of Perozes, his Vizier. Is this an evil thing?

MOGU

I have heard the tales. The oppressors of the poor cannot impose upon me.

NARJIS

Do you not believe that the King has found delight in me?

MOGU

It may be so, my Daughter.

NARJIS

He has bestowed upon me dresses and slaves, jewels and ornaments.

MOGU

If the King has been good to you, bestow something on me, your father. Give me back the string of coins that you took with you.

NARJIS

O my Father, I have bestowed these on one of my slave girls.

MOGU

Have I not said it? You take the bread from the

children's hands and give it to the dogs. (*Narjis goes to a girl who stands by the litter. The girl takes a string from her neck and gives it to Mogu's daughter*) How easily these things come and go! (*Narjis gives the coins to Mogu, who speaks fawningly*) How munificent is the Court! How lavish the King! How fortunate is my child! If the King would provide me with a maintenance, I would accept it, my Daughter!

NARJIS

The King has given you the highest place of all. He will receive you to-night, my Father, and the chamberlains will prepare you for the visit. And now I go, for the King awaits me at the pavilion.

[*She gets into the litter and is carried off R., the slave girl walking beside the litter.*

NUSEYR

Chamberlains, it is for you to see that the Vizier is fitly robed and properly conducted to the Pavilion of the Baths.

[*Nuseyr goes off R., following the litter.*

MOGU

It may be that those who live in courts, who eat much food and drink much wine, become intoxicated in their reason and lose the support of their understanding. It may be that what the poet and my daughter have spoken of has actually come to pass. It may be that I have attained to a degree of eminence. (*The chamberlains bow before Mogu*) Bring me the wine cup. (*Shedad brings the wine cup. Mogu drinks*) Shedad and Shedid! You are like the beaten ones of the cities — one of you looks like a starveling porter and the other like a dustman. You would look different if you were drunk with wine of Cyprus. I drink in consideration

of your daughter, Shedad. (*He drinks again*) You have sandals, Shedad. Strip them off and let Shedid put them upon my feet.

[*Shedad takes off his sandals. Shedid kneels down and puts them on Mogu's feet. Mogu unwinds Shedid's turban and puts it upon his own head.*

SHEDID

The jewels on the turban are small, but they may make the gift more acceptable to my Lord.

MOGU

What else will ye give?

SHEDID

We will give you all your Lordship looks upon.

MOGU

Would you give me your lives?

SHEDID

Under Chosroes we have no lord but Mogu.

MOGU

Would you give me your wives?

SHEDAD

Your Lordship would not make such a claim.

MOGU

I know not. I have the insolence of a crocodile. But where are the other parts of the Vizier's dress?

SHEDID

Kassim-Farraj has charge of your wardrobe, my Lord.

MOGU

Go to this Kassim-Farraj and bid him appear before me with the robes of the Vizier.

SHEDID

I hear and I obey.

[*Shedid goes R.*

MOGU

And you, Shedad, go instantly and bid them bring the Vizier's litter here. (*As Shedad goes R., Mogu flings the wine cup after him*) Leave the wine cup with the treasure of the Vizier, O my Servants.

SHEDAD

We will leave it with the rest of your treasures, Master. [*Shedad and Shedid go off R.*

MOGU

Master, they say to me! How well they know when the mastery is in me! Yesterday I would have called either of them Master. I called many men Master — even such as ate stinking meats and slept in filthy places on the ground. "Master, I faint in the long days because the bread you give is not enough." "What, are there no roots in the earth?" "Master, I perish because the wind has stripped away my rags." "What, are there no travelers to be robbed?" "Master, I would see my wife." "What, must I support your progeny also?" Those eaters of stinking meats and liers in unclean places! I would they could see me now with the great men of the Persians paying homage to me! Ha, they shall waken up one day and find the wolf with a nose buried in their necks. Yesterday my feet were bruised and my belly was empty and the stripes on my back were sore. And to-day I am what I am.

"Master," says Shedad, the Chamberlain of the King. Chosroes is my friend. Who is Chosroes? A beggar woman fled with two robbers. Each of them possessed her and from this famous conjunction proceeded the race that first headed it over a band of robbers and afterwards kinged it over Persia. It is possible that

Chosroes is sprung from Mogu's fore-great-grandam. Lo, the vulture in the sky! Thou art the sign of Mogu, O earth-watching, high-flying Fowl of the Desert. O Fowl, thou art in Mogu's heart. O Vulture, thou shalt tear strips from the backs of the necks of the great men of the world!

[*He is standing with his back to the back of the scene, holding out his hands towards the flying vulture. An old man appears at back. His figure is wasted and his beard overgrown. He appears as coming up steps at back.*

THE OLD MAN

O Thou who hast prospered!

MOGU

What would you with Mogu, Old Man?

THE OLD MAN

The Old Man of the Desert would show Mogu his destiny.

MOGU

I will go with you, Old Man.

THE OLD MAN

Nay! The destined one is without possessions.

MOGU

I am without possessions.

THE OLD MAN

There are gold coins in your hand and there are little jewels on your turban.

MOGU

The coins are a womanly ornament merely — a gift from my daughter.

[*The Old Man of the Desert goes down a step.*

THE OLD MAN

I seek him who is without possessions.

MOGU

I know thee, Old Man. Why did you not call to me an hour ago?

THE OLD MAN

The calculation was not then complete.

MOGU

Would you cheat me out of my gold and jewels?

THE OLD MAN

O Man, would you cheat your destiny?

MOGU

I will bury my gold and follow you.

[*The Old Man of the Desert goes down another step.*

THE OLD MAN

Where is he who is without possessions?

MOGU

I will cast my gold aside and listen to you.

THE OLD MAN

Into the well!

MOGU

Into the well?

THE OLD MAN

The gold into the well and the jewels of the turban also.

[*A pause.*

MOGU

It shall be said that Mogu cast his jewels and gold into the well!

[*He throws into the well the string of coins and the jewels on the turban.*

MOGU

What now, Old Man?

THE OLD MAN

Your right hand shall be over a King!

[*He disappears.*

MOGU

From this moment I am the Vizier indeed! My right hand shall be over a King!

[*Kassim-Farraj enters from R., followed by the three Ethiopian captives, Yunan, Duban and Zahal. Two of the captives carry an open trunk, and one walks behind.*

KASSIM-FARRAJ

My Lord Mogu, the unworthy person who stands before you is the Historiographer of the Vizier, Kassim-Farraj.

MOGU

We have heard of you, Kassim-Farraj. What have you brought?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Personally I have brought tablets to fill up with your deeds, my Lord. These trusted Ethiopian captives, Yunan, Duban and Zahal, bring in the trunk in which you behold the robes and emblems proper to a Vizier.

MOGU

I shall put on the robes and emblems before I go into the Vizier's litter.

[*The Three Ethiopian captives stand by the trunk and display the robes. The ass-tenders with camp followers and soldiers crowd in on all sides.*

KASSIM-FARRAJ (*putting the robe on Mogu*)

This is the robe that has been mentioned in the histories of Persia. (*Mogu adopts a dignified attitude. The crowd express admiration*) And this is the sword of the Vizier. Its blade is graven with mystic names.

MOGU

It may be that I shall carry that sword in my hand.

[*The sword is laid against the trunk. The crowd gape at it. Kassim-Farraj brings over another object to Mogu.*

MOGU

Ha! What is this?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

It is the mirror of brass, a precious possession of the Viziers of Persia.

[*He holds the mirror to Mogu.*

MOGU

This then is Mogu, the Vizier of the King! The turban becomes you, Mogu, and the robe also. But you are lean, Mogu, lean. A Vizier may devour men!

[*Shedad and Shedid appear before Mogu.*

MOGU

Where is my litter, Shedad and Shedid?

SHEDID

Your litter is on the way, Lord Mogu.

MOGU

Why did you not hasten its coming? Would you have the Vizier walk to the Baths? (*Slaves hurry in with the litter. It is lowered, and Mogu steps into it. The litter is lifted up*) There is one thing still upon my mind.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

What is it, O Lord?

MOGU

Bid the people be silent.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Be silent, O People. The Vizier would speak.

[*All become silent and attentive.*

MOGU

It has been said from old times — yea, it has been written in many books — that a man who has survived

his enemies, even for one hour, has happiness. Is it not true, O People?

SOME

We have heard it said.

OTHERS

We know it to be true!

MOGU

Therefore, I will not enter the bath until mine enemies, Shedad and Shedid, have been beaten. Let them be tied to the place of punishment and beaten with sticks. I, the Vizier, command this. (*The crowd lay hands on Shedad and Shedid*) Let them be beaten so that I may hear their groans before I go to the bath. (*Shedad and Shedid are fastened to the crosspieces*) Bearers, lower the Vizier. Let the Sword of the Enchantments be given to me. (*The litter is laid on the ground, and Kassim-Farraj brings Mogu the sword. Mogu gets out of the litter. Taking the sword from the scabbard, he flashes it about*) Mogu, Mogu, Mogu! Thy genius hath touched thee, Mogu! Thou hast triumphed, thou hast liberated thyself from the desert, thou hast become a terror to men! The Empire is thine, Mogu, — the gold, the purple, the women. The world trembles at thy shadow!

[*He gets into the litter. The bearers move to carry it L. They are met by another litter, entering. This litter has a Roman guard.*

THE ROMAN GUARD

Make way for the Lord Helenus!

MOGU'S GUARD

Make way for the Lord Mogu.

THE ROMAN GUARD

Room for Cæsar's ministers!

MOGU'S GUARD

Room for Mogu, the Vizier of the King!

[*The litter is driven backwards and forwards amid cries of "Cæsar, Cæsar" "Mogu, Mogu." Mogu's litter is at last forced through. The servants and the rabble rush after Mogu with shouts.*

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT

The Hall of Histories. It is a great ruin: at the back pillars remain with paintings, sculptures and inscriptions upon them. In the foreground certain pillars have fallen. Left are fragments of pillars with great stones strewing the ground.

Chosroes and Nuseyr pass, returning from the chase. There is an attendant with them. Chosroes carries a falcon.

CHOSROES

Nuseyr, what presents shall we send
Our father-in-law?

NUSEYR

The basket of Syrian peaches, King.

CHOSROES

Not those, Nuseyr;
The Syrian peaches are a gift for Caesar.

NUSEYR

Then let the father of Narjis, my Lord,
Be honored more than Caesar.
And with the Syrian peaches there should go
A basket of the lilies of Damascus.

CHOSROES

But these blossoms
Are perfect loveliness, Nuseyr.

NUSEYR

And with the peaches and the lilies
A jar of the wine of Shiraz should be given.

CHOSROES

Nuseyr, your habit
Of thinking lyrically, becomes expensive to me.
But still you'll see that I
Shall have all sent —
The lilies, and the peaches and the wine. (*He gives the falcon to an attendant and speaks to him*) Go to Sparimixes, and bid him send to Mogu
The rarities of the Pavilion, and make the Steward know
The lilies and the peaches and the wine
Are rarities indeed, and bid him send them
By trusted messengers. Now make him understand
That if even one blossom of the lilies
Should go astray, that I shall have him
Impaled outside the Camp, and that forty of his kinsmen
Shall be impaled beside him. Make him understand.
(*The attendant goes off R.*) My Narjis will come
To this place at this hour, and I shall take her
To see the fish-ponds; after that, Nuseyr,
You and I will don disguise and go
Where Mogu gives the judgments of a Vizier.

NUSEYR

I am reading the inscription
Upon the pillar here.

CHOSROES

The form of the writing is unknown
To me, Nuseyr.

NUSEYR

The writing says:
"The love of this fair woman has taken away
The shadow from my path."

CHOSROES

Such an inscription I shall put above
The gate of the City I am about to rebuild;
My sacred City, Shira.

NUSEYR

It says too . . . But no —

CHOSROES

What else is in the writing?

NUSEYR

After a little I will interpret it.

CHOSROES

I shall rebuild
My sacred Capital, and I will have
High towers in it, and astronomers
Shall come, and observe new courses, and inform us
Of the austere ways of the Heavens; also Greek philosophers
Shall come, and shall explain to us the mysteries
Of lines and figures. I shall have musicians too.
Also, Nuseyr, I have had a message
From one beyond the desert, an Arabian;
And he maintains, Nuseyr, that God is one.
This man shall also come, and he shall debate
This speculation with Greeks and Indians,
And with men who know themselves to be
Reincarnated priests of the Egyptians.

NUSEYR

May my lord have peace in Shira.

CHOSROES

I shall put away the harem
That encumbers all my soul.

NUSEYR

And give your love to the daughter of the desert,
Narjis.

CHOSROES

I would that there were one to whom I could
Confide the government of the Empire; but that son
of mine,
Prince Pharanices, thinks only of the wine-cup.

NUSEYR

And the stable.

CHOSROES

The wine-cup and the stable. Then there is Artavades—

NUSEYR

I have said King Artavades
Is like a Tartar's hound; he flies from one,
Or paws, or springs upon one, and no one knows—
He does not know himself — what he will do.

CHOSROES

He is a tool
For those iron-handed Romans. I have not forgiven
Artavades
That he has kept his army, and gave no aid
To me nor to the Romans in the battle.

NUSEYR

Behold, the beloved has come.

[*Narjis, with women attendants, has appeared R.*

CHOSROES

And you will live in Shira, and I shall give you
Desirable women.

NUSEYR

May it not be
That my soul too is encumbered.

CHOSROES

You shall have
A hundred disciples. But you have not read
What remains of the inscription. Read it to me
When we come back this way, for we shall return
On our way from Mogu's judgments. Nuseyr, farewell.

[*Chosroes goes off R.*

NUSEYR (*reading the inscription*)

"A little hole was made
In his harness, and the life of the King departed."
The King will go to Shira, then I shall go
To India, and the branch of a tree
Shall be my sacred city, and my life
Shall become part of the silence; now I know
Too many words and too many images
Have trampled through my mind. Yea, my soul,
We'll go one day to India, and to
The sacred silence.

[*Nuseyr goes off. The Crier of the Camp comes on with his rattle.*

THE CRIER

These are the words of the Assembly of the Camp: We have considered the loss suffered by the Lord Mogu, the Vizier: to wit, the loss of his familiar plaything, namely, Simsim, a mouse.

[*Mogu, richly dressed, comes on with Kassim-Farraj.*

MOGU

He speaks of Simsim.

THE CRIER

Thus saith the Assembly: Be it decreed that fifty Captains of the Army search diligently for Simsim, with the intention of restoring him with all honor to the Vizier.

MOGU

We are pleased by this.

THE CRIER

And be it requested from the Stewards of the King, that the Royal Huntsmen, Barrabash and Burrabash, be asked to add themselves to the searchers.

MOGU

This is no less than a multitude. It will put my mouse into a fright. I know Simsim.

THE CRIER

A sweet-voiced damsel, namely Food-of-Hearts, is to accompany the searchers, so that her voice, reminding him of his master, may lure Simsim from his secret place.

MOGU

There is sense in that. I hope she is really sweet-voiced, this Food-of-Hearts.

THE CRIER

With the consent of Chosroes, let it be done.

MOGU

Let it be done. (*The Crier of the Camp goes off*) Yes, Kassim-Farraj, my story is wonderful, and should be engraved on plates of gold and kept in the treasure houses of kings. As I was telling you, I was carried to the baths, and I disported myself in a tank of water that had been infused with rose-water. The fountain played upon me then, and thereafter I was rubbed with the bag.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

My Lord, you speak of these things with an eloquent tongue.

MOGU

I was rubbed with the bag, as I have said. And the

man who rubbed showed me the multitude of impure particles that had adhered to my skin. These impure particles were sufficient to astonish the mind by reason of their multitude and magnitude.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

My Lord, you make common things remarkable.

MOGU

You have not permission to speak thus, Kassim-Farraj. Thereafter I sat on a mattress, and my feet were rubbed by a well-formed damsel. I still think of that damsel. Moon-of-Love was her name.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

You must not forget about the marriage contract, my Lord.

MOGU

The marriage contract with Shedad's daughter — is it not so?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Yea, my Lord. I would speak to you about it here.

MOGU

You have permission. But what damsel is this that approaches?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

It is the damsel that the Crier spoke of, — Food-of-Hearts.

MOGU

It is she who brings Simsim.

[*Food-of-Hearts enters, carrying a little cage.*

FOOD-OF-HEARTS

I bring my Lord a cage of ivory with golden bars.

MOGU

Deliver it.

[*Food-of-Hearts hands Mogu the cage.*

MOGU

But Simsim is not in the cage.

FOOD-OF-HEARTS

Alas, my Lord, Simsim refused to disclose himself.

MOGU

And I have been given an empty cage.

FOOD-OF-HEARTS

They thought it would be some compensation for the loss of Simsim. It is of ivory and gold.

MOGU

It is no compensation. But let it be placed amongst my treasures. A piece of ivory has been left in the cage. I will bestow it upon you, Food-of-Hearts. (*He takes the piece of ivory out of the cage*) There is a painting on it. Lo, it is the painting of a woman.

FOOD-OF-HEARTS

O my Lord, I crave indemnity. The cage was once the Lady Gazeleh's, and it may be that her portrait has been left in it.

MOGU

Is it the portrait of one who is in this world, or is it of one who is in the Gardens of Eternity? On your life, speak.

FOOD-OF-HEARTS

It is the portrait of one who is in the world, Lord.

MOGU

Of one who is in the world! Lo, my soul is seized upon, and haled out of my body.

[*He falls on the ground.*

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O Food-of-Hearts, what have you done?

FOOD-OF-HEARTS

The cage was taken from the keeping of the Lady

Gazeleh, and she prevailed upon me to let the Vizier see the portrait and the writing that is on the back of it.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

You have distracted the mind of the Vizier. (*He raises Mogu from the ground*) Behold, he looks on us with unseeing eyes! And this is the hour when Shedad with his brother and the notables of the Persian Empire are to wait on him with proposals for his marriage with Jemeleh, Shedad's daughter. Go, you bird-brained girl.

[*Food-of-Hearts goes off.*

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O my Lord, do you not recall that a moment ago we were speaking of the affairs of the Empire?

MOGU

Gazeleh!

KASSIM-FARRAJ

And you had said that your Genius would enable you to further the Empire of the Persians, and that the country of the Greeks should be laid under tribute, — the country of the Greeks where the wine of Cyprus comes from, and where the women go about with their faces unveiled?

MOGU

How could I have known about women when I had not seen the portrait of Gazeleh?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O my Lord, you had given your mind to the thought of Jemeleh.

MOGU

Who is this Jemeleh?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

The daughter of Shedad, my Lord. She has been described as the mistress of moon-like beauties.

MOGU

I know not that I have ever been aware of her existence.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O my Lord, the marriage contract has already been made out, and some score darricks of gold have been mentioned as a dowry.

MOGU

Kassim-Farraj, you distract my mind from the thought of Gazeleh.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

And at this very moment, my Lord, Shedad and Shedid and the notables of the Persian Empire approach with the marriage contract.

MOGU

Receive them, Kassim-Farraj. I would withdraw myself to gaze upon the loveliness of Gazeleh.

[*Shedad and Shedid, with two of their friends, notables of the Persian Empire, enter, discussing.*

SHEDID

Already he is known as the Fortunate Vizier.

FIRST NOTABLE

Yes, Friend, but twoscore darricks of gold —

SHEDAD

This alliance will lift us into splendor and tumble us into beggary.

SHEDID

It will, Brother, it will.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O my Lords Shedad and Shedid, and Notables of the

Empire, I know not how to speak my embarrassment to you. The Fortunate Vizier has fallen into a maze of thought. I do not know how to draw his attention to the business of the marriage contract.

FIRST NOTABLE

What! Surely the contract of marriage with the daughter of our notable relative cannot have gone from his mind?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

It may be that I can draw his mind back to it. (*He indicates a boy who carries cups and a jar of wine*) Is this your cup-bearer, Lords?

SHEDAD

It is our cup-bearer.

[*Kassim-Farraj goes to Mogu.*

KASSIM-FARRAJ

My Lord, my Lord, behold the cup-bearer, my Lord.

MOGU (*as if waking up*)

Is this the hour when I should drink a cup of wine, Kassim-Farraj?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Yea, my Lord.

MOGU

Have engraved on my wine-cup the name Gazeleh.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Yea. And my Lord, these notables would drink a cup of wine with the Fortunate Vizier.

MOGU

I shall drink with them, Kassim-Farraj. (*The boy fills a cup for Mogu. Fills another for Shedad. Mogu goes over and drinks with Shedad, apparently without recognizing him*) I drink with you, O Scant of Beard.

SHEDAD

I drink with you, my Lord.

[*They raise cups and drink with ceremony. Boy fills Mogu's cup again. Fills Shedid's cup.*

MOGU

I drink with you, O Scrawny Neck.

SHEDID

I drink with you, my Lord.

[*They raise cups and drink with ceremony. Boy fills Mogu's cup again. Fills cup of first notable.*

MOGU

I drink with you, O Lank of Jaw.

FIRST NOTABLE (*who is pretentious*)

I drink with you, my Lord.

[*Boy fills Mogu's cup again. Fills cup of second notable.*

MOGU

I drink with you, O Man with the Face of an Ant-eating Beast.

SECOND NOTABLE (*who is dignified*)

I drink with you, my Lord.

[*They drink with ceremony.*

MOGU

For the cup, O Boy. Another draught.

[*The boy fills the cup again. Mogu drinks alone.*

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O my Lord, I crave that you look with an eye of benignity on the notables assembled before you.

MOGU

Is there one amongst them who can relate a tale or perform an extraordinary action?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Nay, my Lord Mogu.

MOGU

I would that there was one amongst them who could perform an extraordinary action or relate a tale, for my mind is remote from business, and I would be diverted.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

I crave my Lord's attention.

MOGU

Nay, Kassim-Farraj, I cannot attend.

KASSIM-FARRAJ (*imploringly*)

The business of the marriage contract, my Lord.

MOGU

What do you say, Kassim-Farraj?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O my Lord, these notables of the empire wait upon you with regard to a contract of marriage between you, the Fortunate Vizier, and the fair daughter that one of them, Shedad, possesses. The contract was spoken of before, and you, my Lord, even made proposals which have been considered. And the amount of the dowry to go with the bride is twoscore darricks of gold.

MOGU

I remember that twoscore darricks of gold were spoken about. I shall speak with these notables. One of them is the father of the bride. He is to be treated with respect and veneration.

[*Shedad, Shedid, and the two notables are standing in a line across. Mogu bows to man nearest back, keeping his body rigid and jerking his head three times.*

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O my Lord, the noble whom you salute is not the father of the bride.

MOGU (*apparently in astonishment*)

Is not this Shedad, the Chamberlain of the King?

[*He stands before the second man and salutes him in the same manner.*

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O my Lord, again you are mistaken.

MOGU

What, is not this the father of the bride?

[*He stands before Shedid and salutes him in the same manner.*

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O my Lord, again you are mistaken.

[*Mogu looks round him. He sees Shedad, who is standing in excess of vexation.*

MOGU

O Kassim-Farraj, inform us if this undistinguished person is the father of the bride who has been described to us as the mistress of moon-like beauties.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

My Lord gazes on Shedad, his future father-in-law.

MOGU (*looking fixedly at Shedad*)

Thou hast indemnity, Shedad. (*Shedad draws out a long scroll. Mogu turns away*) Kassim-Farraj, I would have you remind me to drink a cup of Greek wine in the morning after the bath.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

I crave my Lord's attention.

MOGU

Nay, Kassim-Farraj.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

The business of the marriage contract, my Lord.

MOGU

We will gratify you, Kassim-Farraj, by regarding it. What articles are embodied in the contract?

SHEDAD

I do not ask a bride-price, my Lord, but my relatives and myself rely upon receiving the protection of the Vizier.

MOGU

I shall bestow upon you and your relatives the protection you solicit. (*Shedad is about to bring the scroll to him, but Mogu motions him away*) Some score of darricks of gold are to go with the damsel as a dowry. Is it not so?

SHEDAD

Twoscore darricks of gold. It has been embodied in the marriage contract, my Lord Mogu.

MOGU

Also the dress and ornaments of the bride must not be worth less than a thousand small pieces of gold.

[*Shedad faints. Shedid fans him, and the two notables support him.*

SHEDID

My brother's life has been imperilled by the shock of the Vizier's demands. We will ask the Vizier to dismiss the business of the marriage contract.

SHEDAD (*recovering*)

We will go back to our homes.

FIRST NOTABLE

If the Vizier will abate his demands, I and my brother will be a surety that the dress and ornaments of the damsel shall not be worth less than five hundred small pieces of gold.

MOGU

I shall ask my historiographer if it has been known that a Vizier has been thus stinted in regard to the dress and ornaments of his bride.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

It has been known, my Lord.

MOGU

Then it shall be that the dress and ornaments of the bride shall be worth five hundred small pieces of gold.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O fortunate Jemeleh.

MOGU

Jemeleh! What have you said, Kassim-Farraj?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Jemeleh is the name the bride bears.

MOGU

Oh, woe to thee, Kassim-Farraj. How could it be that I should wed one who is not Gazeleh? O Gazeleh! Oh, arrows and spears of beauty!

KASSIM-FARRAJ

The Vizier has fallen into a maze again.

SECOND NOTABLE

It is plain that the Vizier diverts himself with our business.

SHEDID

It is proper for us to go from his presence. Come, Brother.

SHEDAD (*rolling up marriage contract*)

We go to our homes, my Lord, and we take the marriage contract with us.

MOGU

Verily, I do not know what you say.

[*Shedad, Shedid, and the two notables go off in anger.*

KASSIM-FARRAJ (*to Mogu*)

My Lord, you have lost Jemeleh for a bride and two-score darricks of gold, with dress and ornaments worth five hundred small pieces of fold.

MOGU

Verily my mind is one spasm of distraction. O Gazeleh, Oh, seductiveness of woman.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

You do not even know who Gazeleh is.

MOGU

O Kassim-Farraj, inform me who Gazeleh is.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Until she secluded herself from him, Gazeleh was the favorite wife of Chosroes, King of Persia.

MOGU

Oh, Oh, Oh! I shall be cut in pieces for having spoken about her.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Not so. Your daughter is now the delight of the King. Gazeleh has taken her papers of divorce.

MOGU

Nevertheless, Chosroes will punish me for having desired her.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Not so. She is now out of his mind, and your daughter fills the whole of it.

MOGU

Would that I could believe it were so. Tell me, Kassim-Farraj, has it ever been known that a Vizier has married one who had been wife to the King?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

It has been known. Several notables and high officers

have married women out of the King's harem. You will observe them at the banquet to-night.

MOGU

But Gazeleh! It is not possible that the King would permit such a one to go from him and to wed with another!

KASSIM-FARRAJ

It is possible.

MOGU

Behold, there is a writing on the back of this portrait! I would have you read it to me, Kassim-Farraj.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

The writing says; Listen, my Lord Vizier.

MOGU

Yea, Kassim-Farraj.

KASSIM-FARRAJ (*reading*)

"There are two in the Camp who will profess themselves to be Ambassadors. If the Vizier seizes these two, he shall come to remarkable honors. From one who wishes him all honor and victory: Gazeleh, the Daughter of Sparimixes."

MOGU

I shall remember this. "Gazeleh, the Daughter of Sparimixes!" Who is Sparimixes, Kassim-Farraj.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

He has no rank, but he has much power. Everything seems to come into his hands, and everything seems to come to his ears. She might know much, the daughter of Sparimixes!

MOGU

And she wishes me all honor and all victory! O Gazeleh!

KASSIM-FARRAJ

And now, my Lord, I would that you could rid your mind of this distraction, for the time has come when you give judgments in the Hall of Nimrod's Pillars.

MOGU

Has the time come, Kassim-Farraj? Do I not go to the judgments in a litter?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

The Vizier walks to the Hall of Judgments.

MOGU

Then I would walk to the Hall of Judgments with a haughty and conceited gait.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O my Lord, I will walk before you, and you may deign to take pattern by my steps.

MOGU

Then walk before me with an arrogant step.

[*Kassim-Farraj walks out L. in a stilted manner. Mogu follows him, exaggerating the walk. The two Ethiopian captives, Yunan and Duban, enter from R., carrying each a basket.*

YUNAN

It is not well that we should hasten, Duban, my brother, seeing that when these, the presents to the Fortunate Vizier, are delivered, we shall be no longer together.

DUBAN

Then it is not well that we, brothers captive in the camp of the Persians, should hasten. I would be a little with you, Yunan, my brother. I bring a jar of the wine of Shiraz.

YUNAN

And I a basket of the lilies of Damascus. O Duban,

my brother, may we not sit here and ease ourselves for a while?

DUBAN

We are wont to make a stay here. Do you remember a saying of our country, Yunan?

YUNAN

What is the saying, my brother?

DUBAN

The day's work is to be done, but more excellent than the work of the day is the talk of the day's work by the evening's fire.

YUNAN

By the talk round the fire, man is distinguished from the beasts. Poetry and story-telling are in this talk by the fire!

DUBAN

O Yunan, those in captivity are as the beasts.

YUNAN

Last night, my brother, I had a dream.

DUBAN

What was your dream, my brother?

YUNAN

I dreamt that you and I and Zahal, our brother, were in our own country and engaged in the pastimes of our youth. Oh, it was beautiful, my dream! I thought that we glided down the river as in the days of our youth. I thought that the willow grew lightly from the mud, and that green branches bent down to the stream.

DUBAN

Alas, alas!

YUNAN

And I thought that my brothers, Duban and Zahal, were happy and at peace.

LIBRARY PLAINFIELD, N. J.

DUBAN

I pour out my tears, for I think that we will never see the Spring in those happy places, my brother.

YUNAN

Lying awake, this thing seemed to me possible: that we might escape from the camp, and join the tribes of the desert, and so win our way back to the country of our youth.

DUBAN

Our brother Zahal has invention and resolve, and he might further our escape.

[*Zahal, a man taller and stronger looking than the other two captives, enters. He carries the basket of peaches.*

ZAHAL

It is not well that we should hasten, seeing that when we have delivered these we shall be no longer together.

YUNAN

Then let us set our burdens here and delight each other with the sight of the things that we carry.

[*They set their baskets down on the stones.*

DUBAN

O my Brothers, behold this: It is a jar of the wine of Shiraz!

ZAHAL (*lifting an inner basket*)

Behold these! They are the precious peaches of Syria.

YUNAN (*lifting up an inner basket*)

And these most lovely blossoms are the lilies of Damascus.

DUBAN

O Zahal, often have we sought for you, but the sight of the captive was denied to his brethren. Often have I said to Yunan: "If Zahal were with us he would give us comfort and hope."

YUNAN

Why are you silent, my brother?

ZAHAL

I have seen cranes fly over my head, and I know them to be of the tribe that stand by the banks of the beloved stream!

YUNAN

We are of the unfortunate race of men and have no wings for flight.

ZAHAL

Then I have thrown myself upon my face and have let my heart tell me a tale of deliverance.

DUBAN

What is the tale that has deliverance in it?

ZAHAL

I have told myself that the camp of the Persians was overwhelmed, and that we, diving under the water, as it were, slipped away to freedom.

YUNAN

And how did the camp of the Persians become overwhelmed?

ZAHAL

Sometimes — and this is a terrible thing — I have told myself that some man brought steel against the King, even against Chosroes, and slew him.

DUBAN

Verily, captives harbor in their minds that which is indescribably terrible!

YUNAN

O brother, relate unto us what happened on the death of him whose name shall not be breathed?

[*The face of Zahal becomes rigid, his eyes roll, his hand stretches out to the peaches.*

ZAHAL

The nobles and soldiers were in confusion.

YUNAN

What else, my brother?

ZAHAL (*drawing a peach towards him*)

The slaves prevailed against the stewards.

DUBAN

O my brother, relate this thing further.

ZAHAL

In the darkness of the night we sped away.

[*He devours the peach, while the others gaze on him, overwhelmed with terror.*

DUBAN

O woe for us, Yunan!

YUNAN

Our brother has devoured one of the peaches of Syria!

ZAHAL

O hasten, brothers, present your gifts, and be not spoken of with me who am doomed to death on account of the destruction of the peach.

YUNAN

Nay, we will not leave you, brother.

DUBAN

Rather will we doom ourselves with you.

[*He takes up a stone and breaks the wine jar. Yunan takes up the narcissi and scatters the blossoms around.*

YUNAN

O Blossoms of the Narcissus, bear death for me also.

[*Yunan and Duban cover their faces with their hands. Zahal gazes outward.*

DUBAN

O my brothers, the river, the river! See with what mystery it flows!

YUNAN

Behold the green branches of the willow bear themselves above the burden of the flood!

DUBAN

Not yet is the time of the water-lilies. And lo, we glide down the stream, three brethren of the one household.

YUNAN

And amongst the torrents who are hardier than we. Lo, our boat is in the torrent that is called The Mother of the Stones!

DUBAN

Pull now, and our toil is over ere the lark of the desert ends his strain!

YUNAN

O Children of the Stream!

DUBAN

O Strong-armed Heroes!

YUNAN

I do not hear the voice of Zahal.

ZAHAL

Who will put my bow in my hand?

DUBAN

What bow do you speak of, brother?

ZAHAL

I have made a bow of a camel's rib. From what I have plucked from the horses' tails I have woven a string for it. I have pulled reeds from the river and have pointed them for arrows. And I am what I was — Zahal, the mighty archer. Who will put the bow in my hands?

DUBAN

What would you do with the bow, my brother?

ZAHAL

I would kill. I would make the confusion of the torrent, so that we might bear ourselves away.

YUNAN

Whom would you kill, my brother?

ZAHAL

He that is greatest. I would kill Chosroes, the King. Lo, I remember. The bow and an arrow I have hidden between these stones where we were wont to make stay.

[*He searches beside the stones and takes up a rude bow and an arrow.*

YUNAN

O my brother, put the oath upon us so that we may share the peril.

[*Zahal grasps the hands of his brothers.*

ZAHAL

The peach has been eaten, the wine jar has been broken, the blossoms have been scattered, and therefore we, the Children of the Stream, must kill Chosroes the King.

DUBAN

By my soul of memories, I swear to kill the King.

YUNAN

By my love for you twain, I swear to kill the King.

ZAHAL

We will stay here, and when the King comes on his way to the Pavilion, I will shoot mine arrow at him. Lo, I shoot now at a mark, so that ye may know that my skill has not been lost. I shoot at the white speck on the brown stone yonder.

[*Zahal draws the bow and shoots an arrow.*

YUNAN

Lo, thou hast struck the mark, Zahal.

DUBAN

Thou hast hit it! Thou hast hit the mark with thine arrow, Zahal.

[*Zahal stands with the bow in his hands. The two brothers crouch beside him, intently watching.*

CURTAIN

THE THIRD ACT

SCENE I

The Hall of Nimrod's Pillars. Only a small part of this great hall is shown. Hangings are stretched across ancient pillars, leaving a small space for the Vizier's divan. Left is a low dais with cushions. There is an entrance Right. The Vizier's entrance is through a space between hangings Center.

A guard stands beside the dais.

Kassim-Farraj enters through space Center.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

It is now the hour for the Vizier's judgments.

THE GUARD

The hour of the Vizier's judgments.

[*Two men enter. One is distinguished in bearing and wears a sword; a turban and a covering along his face conceal his features. The other is small and supple, insinuating in bearing and loquacious in speech.*

SECOND MAN

We are ambassadors, and in crossing the desert this one became blind. We have come to pay homage to the Fortunate Vizier.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

In a little while the Vizier will appear.

SECOND MAN

This one became blinded in the desert, as I said. Is it permitted to sit while we wait the coming of the Fortunate Vizier?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

If he is a worthy person, he shall have indemnity.

[*The First Man seats himself on cushions C.*

SECOND MAN

You are acquainted with the Vizier? You are his historiographer, perhaps. Will you inform us under what title he prefers to become known?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

As yet the Vizier has assumed no title.

[*Mogu strides out. He wears the Vizier's robe of black and holds a whip in his hand.*

MOGU

This whip shall give me my title. I shall be known as the Vizier with the Whip.

KASSIM-FARRAJ (*bowing*)

The Vizier with the Whip.

MOGU

And now, Kassim-Farraj, I shall drink my customary cup of wine.

[*Kassim-Farraj gives him wine and Mogu drinks.*

MOGU

We shall receive the ambassadors first. He that is acquainted with our language has permission to speak.

[*The Second Man comes forward with many prostrations, leaving First Man seated C. As he comes forward, Chosroes and Nuseyr enter R., disguised. They remain at entrance.*

MOGU

From what people do you come?

SECOND MAN

We are ambassadors from the Arabians, O Fortunate Vizier.

MOGU

And what words have you for us?

SECOND MAN

O Fortunate Vizier, your elevation has been foretold to us by the astrologers of our country.

MOGU

We listen to you, O Suppliants of the Arabians.

SECOND MAN

The people of our remote province would deem that their land had attained dignity indeed if the Fortunate Vizier would attend a banquet we are about to prepare.

MOGU

And this banquet — when does it take place?

SECOND MAN

To-morrow, Magnificence.

MOGU

If it does not conflict with our dignity, we will attend.

SECOND MAN

O Fortunate Vizier! Our province hath become a kingdom only through your intercession.

[*He falls on his knees, holding up his arms. Mogu glances along the bare arms and then takes up his whip and brandishes it. The man cowers down. The First Man springs to his feet. All present are astonished at Mogu's action.*

MOGU

I crave forgiveness, O Ambassadors! My hand inadvertently took up this whip. But tell me, Ambassadors from the Arabians, have you any other business besides preparing a banquet?

SECOND MAN

We will not discuss affairs until the third day. And

we have certain rarities with us that the Vizier might care to look upon.

MOGU

No doubt. I am looking at the clasp on your cloak. Is it of gold of Arabia? (*Mogu puts his hand suddenly on the cloak, tearing it off with the tunic*) O Dog of a Spy! Would you persuade us that the Arabians leave marks of chains upon the arms of their ambassadors? Well do I know the marks of the chains that I saw when the sleeves of your tunic slipped back. (*All are astonished. The man supposed to be blind draws his sword and rushes at Mogu. Mogu knocks the sword out of his hand with the end of his whip. The Guard seizes this man. Kassim-Farraj seizes second man. Chosroes and Nuseyr look on with interest*) Verily, this is a person of distinction — this man with the sword.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O Vizier, reveal his name to us.

MOGU

Presently I will do so, Kassim-Farraj. Look upon the man, my Guard.

[*Guard looks closely at his prisoner.*

GUARD

O sight to astonish mankind!

MOGU

The Guard is astonished at the greatness of him whom Mogu has taken.

GUARD

O Event to be chronicled in the Histories of Kings!

MOGU

Speak. Thou hast permission to inform the assembly of this person's distinction.

GUARD

This is none other than King Artavades.

MOGU

Said I not so? Did I not inform you that such was the case? Have you not seen how Mogu the Vizier takes a king in his net?

CHOSROES

Artavades here! It is certain he has come as a spy.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O Vizier who has been fed on the milk of wisdom and rocked in the cradle of experience!

GUARD

Behold Chosroes, the Master of the Persians, is here.

[*Mogu prostrates himself.*

CHOSROES

We have seen how your wisdom serves us, and we will bestow a distinction upon you now. To-night, at the banquet, you have permission to cry out as you enter, "All that has happened has proceeded from me." Guard, take King Artavades to a secure place.

[*The Guard takes away King Artavades. Another guard enters and takes Second Man. Chosroes and Nuseyr go out.*

MOGU

This is an event to be entered in the book of my history, Kassim-Farraj.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Already I have entered it in the book of your deeds, Lord Mogu. It was seen by all that your right hand was over a king.

MOGU

My right hand was over a king! When was that, Kassim-Farraj?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

When you took King Artavades.

MOGU

Yea. When I took King Artavades my right hand was over a king. This troubles me. It was prophesied that my right hand should be over a king.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

And now the prophecy has been fulfilled.

MOGU

Say not so, Kassim-Farraj. I am disturbed in my mind lest the taking of King Artavades should be the whole of the prophecy. When I had taken him, I should have remembered the prophecy and thrown the paring of a nail over my right shoulder. This I neglected to do.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

This shall matter nothing to the Vizier who is the friend of the bestower of fortune — Chosroes the King.

MOGU

I neglected to cast the paring of a nail over my left shoulder. It may have been my evil genius who caused me to neglect this. (*A veiled woman enters through the space C. Mogu, looking around, sees her. The woman lifts a hand out of her wrappings*) O Perfume! O Shapeliness! (*She unveils her eyes and turns them on Mogu*) Oh, arrows and spears of beauty. (*She lifts her half bared arms and makes fluttering motions with her hands*) O, seductiveness of woman! O, Gazeleh.

THE WOMAN

Verily I am Gazeleh. Because I would have you know me, I left my portrait in ivory in the cage that was taken to you.

MOGU

But will not Chosroes punish me for looking upon you?

GAZELEH

Nay. Nor would he be displeased if I became the Vizier's wife.

MOGU

My wife! Is such a thing possible?

[*Gazeleh unveils. She is the woman of the harem with painted lips, widened eyes and joined eyebrows.*

MOGU

O thou Moon! Thou makest me sink down to think that such a one as you would come to me. O Mistress of my Soul! And could Chosroes turn from such delights as thou couldst give?

GAZELEH

Chosroes is one that turns from life. I come to thee because thou art without weariness.

[*She puts her arms round his neck.*

MOGU

Is it true what thou hast said, O Gazeleh? That thou mayst become my wife?

GAZELEH

After the banquet to-morrow, the banquet of which I heard you speak, I shall become your bride.

MOGU

Can it be? And may a woman of the harem of the Great King wed with another?

GAZELEH

Yes. Many women of the harem of the Great King have wed with the chief men of the Empire.

MOGU

And is nothing exacted from them for such a marriage?

GAZELEH

A little — but thou shalt see them at the Banquet of the King to-night.

MOGU

O Mistress of my Soul! Were it my right hand, I should not begrudge it if it were exacted from me for my marriage with thee.

GAZELEH

You might lift up your right hand and cover what is exacted.

MOGU

And is it possible that thou wilt wed me?

GAZELEH

After the banquet to-morrow — yea.

[*They embrace.*

MOGU

I know not but my mind shall be distracted by this!

[*She goes from him.*

GAZELEH

And my dress and ornaments shall be worth more than a thousand darricks of gold.

MOGU

O my Life! And how shall this be made known to the King?

GAZELEH

I shall make it known to the King and to the King's servants, and all shall be prepared.

MOGU

Goest thou now, O Rapture of my Heart?

GAZELEH

It is not proper that I should remain near you before all things are put in order, O my Lord!

MOGU

Alas, thou goest, Light of mine Eyes!

GAZELEH

And to-morrow I shall come as my Lord's bride.

[*She goes out.*

MOGU

Verily I am plunged into distraction. (*He claps his hands. Kassim-Farraj appears. Mogu puts cushions around and on top of him as he reclines on the dais*) I would plunge into the restfulness of sleep from this moment until it is time for the banquet and the bridal. I would dream of Gazeleh without the distraction of intervening time. O Kassim-Farraj, do you know of languid and melting music that you might play to me?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

I will look for my flute, my Lord.

MOGU

I would that you would find it. Also bring me a bowl of rose-water, Kassim-Farraj. I would perfume my beard. (*Kassim-Farraj goes through opening left of dais*) O Gazeleh! My mind will be distracted from the affairs of the Empire until at least three days of my marriage with you! (*Kassim-Farraj returns with a bowl of rose-water and a flute. He places the bowl beside Mogu. Mogu takes off his turban and drenches it with rose-water. He puts rose-water on his beard and fans his beard. Kassim-Farraj begins to play the flute. He splutters and plays badly*) I like such music, Kassim-Farraj. It reminds me that Gazeleh has a form like unto the Oriental willow. (*Kassim-Farraj plays a new piece as badly as before*) Thy music is wonderful, Kassim-Farraj. It reminds me that Gazeleh has a

mouth like the seal of Solomon. Have you other ravishing melodies?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

I have one more tune, my Lord.

[*He plays again as badly as before.*

MOGU

Oh, Oh, Oh! Thou dost remind me, Kassim-Farraj, that Gazeleh has a spot on her neck like the mark of Ridwan. Play all thy tunes over again, Kassim-Farraj! (*Kassim-Farraj plays on the flute again, while Mogu fans his beard and nods his head. Two fellows enter, each carrying a little bag*) Kassim-Farraj, explain to these men that the mind of the Vizier is remote from business and that he cannot attend to affairs.

FIRST FELLOW

It is only the business of the nose-trimming.

MOGU

The beard-trimming, he means. This is a distraction, but it might be well if my beard was trimmed now.

[*He goes R. of dais.*

SECOND FELLOW

I put the silk handkerchief round his neck and hold him down while my comrade trims his nose.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

I know you now. You are Ishak and Shakakik, the nose-cutters of the Court.

ISHAK (*sharpening a short knife on his sleeve*)

Right you are, Brother.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

And you have come to cut off the Vizier's nose!

SHAKALIK

We haven't made a mistake, have we? He is marrying a lady of the harem?

ISHAK

We have made no mistake. Have we, brother?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

No mistake. But I think that the Vizier does not know that he has to wear the honorable mark of noselessness.

ISHAK

He must be a stranger to these parts.

SHAKALIK

He is, brother — he is.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Keep the cutting instruments behind your backs until I explain the custom to him. O my Lord Mogu!

MOGU (*appearing at opening right of dais*)

What is it, Kassim-Farraj? May I not have my beard trimmed within?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

These are the nose-trimmers, my Lord.

MOGU

They are the nose-trimmers, did you say?

ISHAK

Aye, the nose-trimmers.

MOGU

I do not understand this.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Know that it is honorable at the Court of Persia for a man to appear noseless. Often the King deigns to let one of his high officers marry a lady of the King's harem. Then the High Officer delivers himself of his nose. It is a penalty and a badge of distinction — a penalty because the King suffers injury and insult even by a woman whom he has once favored passing from him to another. It is a badge of distinction because

a state of noselessness lets the beholders know that such a one possesses one whom the King had cherished.

MOGU

This is a matter of which I should have been informed.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O my Lord, you would have been informed to-night by seeing noseless men at the banquet of the King.

MOGU

And for marrying a lady of the harem a man loses his nose?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

It is so, O Vizier.

MOGU

Gazeleh, O Gazeleh! But even for her sake I should preserve my nose. How could such a one as she have affection for a noseless man?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O my Lord, it is the ladies who most rigidly insist upon the etiquette of nose-cutting. For how could it be known that they had been cherished by the King if their husbands appeared as full-nosed beings?

MOGU

This is not an admirable custom, Kassim-Farraj.

ISHAK

We brought masks with us to show you how some of the high-up officers looked after we had taken their noses off.

SHAKALIK

The masks are in wax, and we took them after we had finished the job. Here is the mask of the Satrap Artabanpan. He was what you might call a fine nosed man!

[*He takes a mask out of his bag and shows it to Mogu.*

ISHAK

He had a troublesome kind of nose, though. One of these high-bridged noses that are bone all through. But your Lordship can see that we made a clean job of it. And this is the mask of Sestoraban!

SHAKALIK

A putty nose! One could have tweaked it off with a finger and thumb!

ISHAK

Then here's a nose like your Lordship's — a well-set nose, you might say — a nose with a tap-root. If I were doing it again, I don't say but I'd grind a nose like that down.

SHAKALIK

I'd use the turning-knife.

ISHAK

No. I'd grind it down.

MOGU

It might, after all, be better if I married Shedad's daughter.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

But think of the honor of possessing one whom the King had cherished.

MOGU

Yes. But still my nose and I have been together for so long that it would be a pain to part with it.

ISHAK

Your Lordship has what I might call one of the old-fashioned sort of noses —

SHAKALIK

A high, bony nose. This marrying with the Kithaians is bringing in a middling sort of nose.

MOGU (*stroking his nose*)

I am only now beginning to be acquainted with my nose. O Kassim-Farraj, must my nose be taken off now?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Not so, Lord Mogu.

MOGU

May I appear at the banquet of the King to-night with my nose upon my countenance?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Assuredly, my Lord.

MOGU

Then I would have these men leave me to stroke my nose for a while.

ISHAK

We thought that as the marriage is on for to-morrow —

KASSIM-FARRAJ

O Nose-cutters, the Vizier will ask you to attend him on another occasion.

SHAKALIK

Well, seeing as we're here — But then we can come back again.

[*They go towards exit.*

SHAKALIK

If his Lordship liked, we could practise a little before calling on him again. The neck of a boiled hen is good to practise on.

MOGU

Procure them the necks of many boiled hens, Kassim-Farraj.

ISHAK

We could buy them ourselves cheap, your Lordship.

MOGU

Give them some coins, Kassim-Farraj.

[*Kassim-Farraj gives nose-cutters coins.*

ISHAK

We thank your Lordship.

SHAKALIK

Rest assured that we'll have an easy hand on your Lordship's face.

[*The nose-cutters go out.*

MOGU

Now that they have gone, I feel once more my desire for Gazeleh. To possess her and to be Vizier — one might yield a nose for such gains. A nose is easily lost, after all. The bough of a tree swinging against the face might bereave one of a nose. Play your flute again, Kassim-Farraj, and let me think of Gazeleh.

[*He seats himself on the dais and Kassim-Farraj plays badly one of the tunes he played before.*

MOGU

O Kassim-Farraj, your playing only recalls noseless face after noseless face. What a nose Gazaleh has! And yet I cannot think of it!

KASSIM-FARRAJ

I will make ready my Lord's raiment for the banquet to-night!

MOGU

Alas, my bosom is contracted because of my desire for Gazeleh and my desire to retain my nose.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Do not forget, my Lord, that the King has bestowed an extraordinary favor upon you.

MOGU

Has he commanded that I retain my nose?

KASSIM-FARRAJ

Not that. But remember that he has permitted Mogu to announce at the banquet to-night, "All that has happened has proceeded from me."

MOGU

"All that has happened has proceeded from me." Until to-morrow all that has happened has proceeded from me.

KASSIM-FARRAJ

This way, my Lord. I will array you for the banquet.

MOGU

I follow you, Kassim-Farraj.

[*Mogu and Kassim-Farraj go out R.*

Attendants now come forward and take away the hangings that had made the space small for the Vizier's divan. A greater extent of hall is now seen. The place is being prepared for the banquet. There are hangings at back across ancient pillars. Between the two middle pillars back there are no hangings, and this leaves an entrance for attendants. Across this entrance, projecting, and above where the attendants pass, is a box with lattices for ladies who may watch what is happening at the banquet. The entrance for guests is Back Left. Right is a decorated wall. Left are pillars with hangings. Right and Left are tables and couches making a shallow crescent on each side. The royal seat, with a canopy, is at end of line.

At entrance Back, Shedad, a wand in his hand, is giving directions to attendants behind. These are sometimes seen passing across. Helenus, the Roman Minister, and Menander his secretary are down Left and standing. Helenus is dressed for the banquet. Menander's dress makes a contrast.

A lady appears at entrance back Left. She unveils for a

moment and shows the face of Gazeleh. She goes through Back and into the ladies' box. Opening the lattices, she shows herself, and then closes them.

HELENUS

This, Menander, is part of the mighty Hall of Nimrod's Pillars. I shall make reference to it in my lecture when we are again in Rome. Observe this pillar. Herodotus says —

MENANDER

Artavades. . . .

HELENUS (*in a low tone*)

Artavades knows he is to introduce himself into the camp.

MENANDER

He has already done so. He has been taken prisoner, and is now in charge of Chosroes' guards.

HELENUS

Infernal Gods! The man is too forward. We may not be able to save his life now. Then we should have no client king in the Far East. Do you know who has power in this camp, Menander?

MENANDER

I do. It is Sparimixes, the Attendant of the Birds.

HELENUS

Yea. That is the man. Go to Sparimixes. You must arrange for the escape of Artavades.

[*A young man and an elderly woman come into the hall. The young man seats himself in the middle of line R. The lady seats herself back L. and remains veiled. The young man is in festal dress and is crowned with roses.*

MENANDER

I go. Chosroes' son, Prince Pharanices, has come into the hall.

HELENUS

Yes. And Chosroes' mother, the Queen Atossa. Let us speak to Pharanices as you go out. Greeting, Prince Pharanices.

PHARANICES

Greeting, Lord Helenus and Lord Menander! I hope you will like our banquet to-night.

HELENUS

In truth, Prince Pharanices, I shall have to keep sober.

PHARANICES

Why?

HELENUS

So that I may be able to watch your ministers.

MENANDER

But you need not fear his vigilance, Prince Pharanices. Your Persian banquets rout a legion of the sober.

PHARANICES

I hope you will be merry, Lord Menander. I will throw dice with you.

[*Pharanices produces a dice box.*

HELENUS

What do you throw for?

PHARANICES

To determine whether we become intoxicated with wine or with hashish.

MENANDER

I have not been invited to the banquet at all. Farewell, Prince Pharanices.

[*Menander goes out.*

PHARANICES

And I had thrown the highest numbers!

[*A dancing girl, Moon-of-Love, comes through attendants' entrance and begins to dance. While she is dancing, cer-*

tain guests enter and take their places. Shedad hurries up hall to dancing girl.

SHEDAD

Slave Girl, desist! (*Moon-of-Love continues to dance. Striking the floor with his staff and speaking authoritatively*) Desist from dancing! Do not weary yourself before the entertainment of the nobles begins! (*Moon-of-Love continues to dance*) Stop. How am I to regulate the banquet and bring everything to its fitness if you distract your mind and weary your body before the banquet begins?

[*Moon-of-Love ceases to dance and stands beside a pillar L. Many guests have now come in. Attendants bring wine jars and fill their cups.*

HELENUS

Is it permitted to drink wine before the King appears at the banquet?

PHARANICES

It is permitted. Chosroes would like to have us merry before he appears.

[*A little maiden enters with a basket of flowers. She leaves flowers at each table as she comes down. Then she begins to arrange flowers on the ground before the royal seat.*

HELENUS

What is that little maiden about to do?

PHARANICES

It is a custom of the banquet. She leaves a message.

HELENUS

A message?

PHARANICES

Yea. This puzzles the foreign envoys. In our language certain flowers stand for certain words.

HELENUS

Yea.

PHARANICES

And Chosroes and his poet Nuseyr always have this little maiden make some message with the flowers before the banquet begins. Look! The inscription is complete.

HELENUS

And what does it say?

PHARANICES

Something wearying, you may guess — with all respect to Chosroes and his poet.

[*The guests have gathered round the flowers. They look startled.*

HELENUS

What does this message say?

PHARANICES

The King does not want to be with us at the banquet to-night, and so he sends this excuse.

HELENUS

And what is the excuse?

PHARANICES

That he is dead.

HELENUS

That he is dead! Is it possible the flowers make such a message?

PHARANICES

They make it, certainly. Look how they go — "The King is dead!" Little girl, who told you to write this?

FLOWER MAID

Nuseyr, sir.

PHARANICES

Nuseyr, the poet?

FLOWER MAID

Yes. When I went to ask what message I should make at the banquet to-night, he instructed me to make that message with the flowers.

PHARANICES

This is in bad taste. Is it not, O Guests?

A GUEST

If the King has not approved of the jest — yea.

PHARANICES

And where is Nuseyr?

FLOWER MAID

He is gone by this. He had on his traveling cloak.

A GUEST

You may be beaten for writing this, little girl. The King may remember that it is not lucky to have it said that he is dead.

THE FLOWER MAID

But the King is dead. I have seen him lying between the fallen pillars in the Hall of Histories. Nusyer took me to see him.

[*Queen Atossa has come down among the guests, who stand around the flower inscription.*

ATOSSA

Chosroes would never speak of death. He dreaded the word. And in these days more than before he dreaded the word, for there seemed to be some premonition in his mind.

A GUEST

If it should be true —

ANOTHER GUEST

Hush. The King lives for ever.

THE ONE WHO HAD SPOKEN

It is true. The King lives for ever.

ATOSSA

Thy message is true. O thou unlucky one, go!

[*She beats her with Shedad's staff. The Flower Maid goes back. The lattices of the box are opened, and Gazeleh looks out. King Artavades breaks into the hall. His dress is torn, and there are bits of chains around his hands. He holds a sword. Sparimixes, a strong and cunning-looking man, follows him. He is richly dressed.*

SPARIMIXES

Princes and Notables of the Persians, I have to announce to you that Chosroes has been slain.

[*There is great confusion. The guests stand up and pour wine on the floor as libations. Mogu enters. He is unconscious of what has moved the guests.*

MOGU (*as he advances along the tables*)

Everything that has happened has come from me! Everything that has happened has come from me!

[*The guests hold out their hands in horror as he passes. He reaches the royal seat and stands before it. The guests, with pious and affrighted gestures, leave the hall. Helenus, Pharanices, Atossa, Artavades, Sparimixes, and Moon-of-Love remain in different parts of the hall.*

MOGU

Remain near me, Moon-of-Love. Kassim-Farraj, my historiographer, is not permitted to attend the banquet, and, as my mind is filled with affairs of state, I need to be reminded of what is customary at the banquet of the King. You shall inform me.

MOON-OF-LOVE

I hear and I obey.

MOGU

It is long since I have been at a banquet at which there were so many kings and princes. But why do they not

sit down to the wine? Why have others gone? Why do those who remain stand watching me?

MOON-OF-LOVE

Oh my Lord, they are affrighted.

MOGU

Why are they affrighted?

MOON-OF-LOVE

On account of the slaying of the King.

MOGU

The slaying of the King!

[*He lets fall the cup he had raised.*

MOON-OF-LOVE

Your declaration has been terrible to them.

MOGU

My declaration!

MOON-OF-LOVE

That you had slain the King.

MOGU

I? Who has declared such a thing?

MOON-OF-LOVE

Did you not say "Everything that has happened has come from me?" And the King has been slain! That is why they are affrighted of you.

MOGU

These words were given me to say. It is certain they were given to me by my evil genius. Now indeed he has triumphed over me.

[*Sparimixes comes to Mogu.*

SPARIMIXES

What a demon thou hast, Mogu!

MOGU

Mine is the most terrible demon that ever possessed a

man! There has been none like to him! I speak only the truth!

SPARIMIXES

A terrible and dangerous demon! We pay homage to him, Lord.

[*Sparimixes goes back.*

MOGU

He does not speak of my destruction.

MOON-OF-LOVE

He would be friendly to thee on account of thy terrible demon.

MOGU

He is terrible only to myself. I declare that I reek with the sweat of fear. And there is King Artavades! Everything that is destructive to me has been assembled! I am as a hare that doubles from an eagle and then sees the beak of a hawk. (*He sinks on the ground before the royal chair*) Woman's wit helps in a desperate situation! Think, what should I do, Moon-of-Love!

MOON-OF-LOVE

Persuade your demon to change you into a mouse and then run out of the hall.

MOGU

It cannot be done, Moon-of-Love.

[*Moon-of-Love goes from him and stands at a pillar L. Artavades, Sparimixes, Pharanices, and Atossa have gathered together. Helenus stands a little apart from them.*

ATOSSA

Then, since Chosroes is dead . . .

ARTAVADES

What would you say, Queen?

ATOSSA

I, myself, am of the Royal Race.

PHARANICES

I am the King's son. I am Chosroes again.

ATOSSA

Boy, go back to the stables.

PHARANICES

I am Chosroes, I say. The treasure belongs to me, and so does the army and the diadem. Go back to your women, Queen. Why do you stand amongst men?

ATOSSA

Chosroes would not entrust you with the meanest province in the Empire.

PHARANICES

Do not speak so insolently. Think of the prison that is before you.

ATOSSA

I shall have myself proclaimed regent.

PHARANICES

Regent, do you say?

ATOSSA

Yes. Regent until my son, — the true offspring of Chosroes, — comes to be king over the Persians.

PHARANICES

Poisoner!

ATOSSA

Dastard!

PHARANICES

It does not matter what poison you spew out. I am the King's son and heir to the Empire. Sparimixes, take in hand the business of having my elevation proclaimed.

SPARIMIXES

Prince Pharanices, I would advise you to accept the government that may be offered to you, — the government of an outlying province.

PHARANICES

Who will offer it to me?

SPARIMIXES

King Artavades.

PHARANICES

King Artavades!

SPARIMIXES

Yes. King Artavades is properly the successor of Chosroes, being related to the Royal Race by his blood.

[*Artavades comes forward. Pharanices takes up wine cup and throws it at him. Then he draws his sword. Sparimixes disarms Pharanices.*

ATOSSA

O hateful Sparimixes, have you brought this man to rule over us?

SPARIMIXES

Is he not more acceptable to you than Pharanices?

ATOSSA

I shall have a Council summoned who will name the ruler or regent.

[*She turns to go.*

PHARANICES

You shall not. It is my right to preside at the Council.

ATOSSA

Fool! To quarrel with me while Sparimixes and the Roman are preparing to make Artavades king over us all.

PHARANICES

I and not any woman shall preside over the Council of State.

ATOSSA

Preside over a council of stable boys, but do not think of presiding over the Council of State.

PHARANICES

Be thankful if you are only shut up in a prison.

[*Pharanices and Atossa go off quarreling.*

ARTAVADES

The death of Chosroes is more fortunate for us than anything we could have planned. But I do not know what to do with the demon-possessed man who did the deed. Menander, Lord Helenus, has gone to the camp of your general. Roman soldiers are to be introduced into this camp immediately.

HELENUS

You confirm all our arrangements?

ARTAVADES

Yes. There is the donative to your army — half of what remains in our treasury.

HELENUS

And the frontier line?

ARTAVADES

It shall be restored. But a certain city within the old frontier line must remain with me.

HELENUS

I shall discuss that with our general. Behold, there are some of his guard. Come, Sparimixes, to our general.

[*Roman soldiers have shown themselves at back. Helenus and Sparimixes go towards attendants' entrance.*

HELENUS

You will join us, King Artavades.

ARTAVADES

You do not address me as Chosroes was addressed?

HELENUS

As Great King? No. The Roman people have decided to let that title become obsolete.

[*There is an unfriendly pause. Sparimixes has gone to*

back. Then Helenus goes too. Both go into the place behind the middle pillars. Artavades stamps with rage.

ARTAVADES

Oh, that I were able to show myself as dangerous to this Helenus! Oh, that I were desperate enough to combat the whole of this Roman arrogance!

[*Mogu comes to him.*

MOGU

Master!

ARTAVADES

The man who slew Chosroes and declared it! This is a dangerous man verily! Would that he would make himself terrible to these Romans!

MOGU

Master!

ARTAVADES

I greet you, Mogu.

MOGU

I crave protection, Master.

ARTAVADES

And I give you protection. My protection is all-sufficing now. I am in the place of Chosroes. I am now King over the Persians.

MOGU

Master, on account of your good fortune, grant me a boon!

ARTAVADES

It shall be granted to you, Mogu. You have been Vizier under Chosroes — you shall be Vizier under me.

MOGU

With your protection, Master?

ARTAVADES

With my protection. I give you this sword as a sign of your office.

[*He gives Mogu his sword.*

MOGU

Would that I could strike the necks of your enemies with one sweep!

ARTAVADES

Be my faithful and dangerous tool. I do not like these Romans.

MOGU

I do not like them, my King. I had a master — I mean I had a slave — who was robbed by the Romans.

[*Artavades makes a warning gesture and goes into part of hall back.*

MOGU

Because they believe that Mogu killed the King, they think he is a great and terrible man. And verily I should be afraid of such a one if I were a king. Doubtless they know too that I am under the protection of a powerful Genius. I did not know he was so powerful. How well he bears me onward! Chosroes is dead, and I am Vizier, and I need not lose my nose on account of marrying Gazeleh! O my Gazeleh! O One desired by the fortunate Mogu! Moon-of-Love, come here!

MOON-OF-LOVE

What would my Lord have?

MOGU

Seek the lady Gazeleh. Invite her to come to the Vizier here.

MOON-OF-LOVE

I need not go far to seek her. She is behind the lattices there.

MOGU

Invite her to come to me here. (*Moon-of-Love goes to the back*) Since Chosroes is dead, there is no reason why I should lose my nose on account of marrying her. (*He pours wine into a cup and drinks*) This is the King's chair doubtless. I shall place myself in it and speak to Gazeleh from the King's chair. (*Gazeleh comes to him from the back*) Doubtless you observed, Gazeleh, that King Artavades has invested me again with the Viziership.

GAZELEH

I observed it, O my terrible Lord.

MOGU

All now think that Mogu killed the King, and all are fearful of him. Is it not so, Gazeleh?

GAZELEH

My Lord knows it is so.

MOGU

Well, as Chosroes was once your lord, I will not appear before you as one who slew him. I did not commit the deed. I know nothing about the slaying of Chosroes.

GAZELEH

Is it so?

MOGU

By my protecting Genius, it is so! I will speak truth to thee, O my Delight. I do not even know who slew the King. But to Artavades and the others I must appear as a terrible being who has it in him to slay a king. If they did not think I was such a one, my Viziership would have died with Chosroes.

GAZELEH

And thou hast not slain the King?

MOGU

No, Gazeleh.

GAZELEH

I shall tell no one what thou hast told me.

MOGU

O Gazeleh, O my Life. After the banquet to-morrow — The King has been slain, and that is a good thing, for now I need not lose my nose by taking you!

GAZELEH

What? Would you take me and keep your nose? Would you leave no mark to show that I, Gazeleh, was the favorite of the King?

MOGU

O Gazeleh, would you have your husband submit to the loss of his nose?

GAZELEH

Is not a vile nose a small price to pay for a woman who has been cherished by the Great King?

MOGU

That King is dead. It is not now necessary to have my nose forfeited.

GAZELEH

And because the King has been slain, am I to be cheated out of my dignities? Not so. It shall be as if Chosroes were still alive. The noseless condition of my husband's countenance shall let all know that I have been the beloved of the King.

MOGU

Listen, O wilful Woman. I am Vizier, and I shall take you without abating one jot of my countenance.

GAZELEH

Not so. My father Sparimixes . . .

MOGU

Ha! Sparimixes is your father!

GAZELEH

Yea. And he is the one who has made Artavades King.

MOGU

Greatly do I desire to have you for my wife, O Gazeleh. And yet . . .

GAZELEH

What would you say?

MOGU

Almost I would choose a woman of less beauty, dignity, and worth and keep my own nose.

GAZELEH

O Slave, to think such a thought! What! You would leave me unwedded on account of a base consideration for a vile nose!

MOGU

Almost I would do so, Gazeleh.

GAZELEH

Almost you would do so! Then I declare that you shall not be permitted to do so.

MOGU

Not permitted! What words do you say, Gazeleh?

GAZELEH

Listen to me, Vizier. Rather than you should commit such baseness, I shall let Artavades know and Sparimixes know that it was not you who slew Chosroes. Then shall the terror go from your name. The sword that Artavades put into your hand shall be wrung from it. You will lose your Viziership. Yea. A worse thing shall befall you.

MOGU

Of what worse thing can you think, O Gazeleh?

GAZELEH

It will be remembered against you that you laid hands on King Artavades and had chains put upon him. There will be no terror round you to protect you from the King's detestation.

MOGU

And what would they do to me?

GAZELEH

I will tell you for your guidance. They will put you into the Tower of Famine and leave you to die of hunger and thirst.

MOGU

Now I see that you are a tigress. And I thought you were a soft and gracious woman, Gazeleh. Oh, you have filled me with such fears that almost I would flee back to the desert. Who are these who come here now?

[*A nondescript crowd has come in from the back of the hall.*

GAZELEH

These — these are only the grooms and servants who have come in to pick what the Lords have left on the tables.

MOGU

Oh, woe to me! I see Ishak and Shakalik amongst them.

GAZELEH

Yes. The nose-cutters are here also. They are with the grooms.

MOGU

O Gazeleh, wilt thou not be gracious and say, "Mogu the Vizier is my Lord. He shall be dear to me with as without his nose."

GAZELEH

It would become a slave girl or a groom's wife to say

that. Rather will I say to Ishak and Shakalik, "It were well not to wait too long to deliver the husband of Gazeleh of his nose. Let it be done before the night is past."

MOGU

You must not speak to them now, O loving heart.

GAZELEH

I shall speak to them. (*She goes to Ishak and Shakalik. They nod as she speaks to them*) Be not sad about what they will do, my Lord. Remember the banquet and the bridal afterwards. Farewell, Mogu.

[*She goes out.*

MOGU

Farewell, unkindly Woman. These nobles are all hard of heart. Oh, that I might be with her and keep my nose! Oh, that I might remain Vizier of the Persians and keep my nose! Oh, that Chosroes had remained King over the Persians! Now all things are different. (*He watches the grooms and servants devour the remains of the feast*) How these men, the grooms and servants, eat! Mogu would have eaten like them yesterday. Yea, and his whole being would have rejoiced over the abundance and the deliciousnes of the food. How much better it is to devour scraps with satisfaction than to eat the breast of the partridge and be afflicted by what is due to the dignity of your wife. Verily, it might be better for me to be a groom of the stable!

[*Ishak and Shakalik come to him, one wiping his mouth with his hand and the other licking his lips.*

SHAKALIK (*familiarly*)

The tools are with us, Vizier, and we can do the job to-night, as the lady said.

MOGU

Will you not drink first, Shakalik?

[*He seats himself despondently on the ground.*

ISHAK

We will set a wine jar here and drink beside you. (*They seat themselves either side of Mogu, a wine jar beside them. The grooms and servants go off*) When the Vizier feels like it, we'll do his job for him.

MOGU

Drink wine, Ishak. You have permission. Drink wine, Shakalik.

[*They drink. Then they yawn.*

ISHAK

These banquets of the nobles keep up late the poor men who have to eat after them.

SHAKALIK

And we have to be on foot early to get bread from the kitchens. Do not blame us if we are sleepy, Lord Vizier.

MOGU

I do not blame you. I could sleep here too.

ISHAK

Then I'll take a rabbit's rest.

SHAKALIK

I'll take a hare's sleep, brother.

[*Both lie down on ground.*

MOGU

Would that you dream that you had taken off my nose and that others would dream they did not see it on me. What contentment can the greatest have if they cannot possess their own nose? My greatness seems secure, but I shall not abide to profit by it. Rather I shall go back to the desert and speak to men about

the Bank of the Hidden Treasures. Would that I had again Simsim, my mouse! And would that I had my own garments! I shall have to take a garment from Ishak and a garment from Shakalik!

[*He begins to draw a garment off one of the sleeping nose-cutters. The scene closes.*

CURTAIN

SCENE II

At the well. It is night, and there is brilliant moonlight. A man in a long, ragged cloak, holding a staff, is seated at side of well.

Mogu, his garment ragged, enters from Left.

THE MAN AT WELL (*rising*)

Ho, Mogu!

MOGU

I have left the nose-cutters behind me. Who are you?

THE MAN

I am Zamm, the One-Eyed Beggar. I was expecting you.

MOGU

That is strange, because I was not expecting myself. I left the garments of the Vizier on the ground, and while the nose-cutters slept, I took part of their clothes, put them on me and came here.

ZAMM

I was expecting you. I have brought a staff to beat and chastise you, and drive you from the camp.

MOGU

Have I left those who would cut off the nose of a Vizier to be beaten by the beggars of the camp?

ZAMM

There is but one beggar in the camp, and he is Zamm, myself. And even for one beggar the off-falls are not plentiful. So when I heard that you were here, I took my staff in my hands and set out to beat and chastise you and drive you from my domain.

MOGU

You have not heard that I have been made Vizier over the Persians?

ZAMM

Is it likely that I would heed such a story as that?

MOGU

Truly, Zamm, if you see me here, it is because I am running away from my Viziership.

ZAMM

I took the weightiest of two staffs and came to beat you from the camp of the Persians.

MOGU

You did not hear of my elevation? This is indeed wonderful! But I perceive you have a staff. Would that I had not neglected to bring a staff with me!

ZAMM

You are without a staff? O foolish Beggar! Go, leave the camp as the jackals leave it!

[*He goes to Mogu, brandishing staff.*

MOGU

Then it is settled! I shall lose my nose, but I shall remain Vizier to have you beaten!

ZAMM

You Vizier! The mouse sitting on the top stone of the well laughs at your saying!

MOGU

The mouse on the top stone of the well! It is surely Simsim! Simsim! It is he! Come into my hand Simsim! Let me take you to my heart! (*The mouse comes into his hand*) You shall be the noseless Vizier's mouse, Simsim! I shall put diamonds around your neck, my pet!

[*Mogu is now behind the well. Zamm is at left side in*

shadow. Yunan and Duban come in from L. Zahal enters from R.

DUBAN

Is it thou, Zahal?

ZAHAL

It is I, O Destroyers of the King!

MOGU

The Destroyers of the King!

YUNAN

What word have you for us, Brother?

ZAHAL

I have told Sparimixes of our deed, and he gives us protection.

MOGU

They have told Sparimixes! Then I may not appear before Sparimixes!

ZAHAL

Sparimixes bids us go in peace, saying it is manifest that we were directed to the event He bids us go to a place on the river where a boat is in readiness.

DUBAN

Our boat floats on the river west of the camp; its oars and sails are in readiness. Soon, soon, shall we sail down the stream.

YUNAN

But far must we go before we see the patch cultivated by our people, where the beans grow out to the river.

DUBAN

But when we land, the pigeons will fly down from their towers and flutter around us!

YUNAN

O beloved Birds! Many generations do you number

since we, three brothers of one household, were taken into captivity.

ZAHAL

Come, Brothers!

[*The three Ethiopian captives go off R.*

MOGU

O you Plunderers! You carry away my fortune!

ZAMM

Stay not there, Vagrant with the Mouse! I would have my liver torn out rather than suffer you to remain. We fight for the undivided off-falls! (*He attacks Mogu with his staff. Mogu lays hands on the staff; with difficulty Zamm wrests it from him*) You have eaten. I did not know that you had eaten!

[*He attacks Mogu again. He strikes the ground, and the staff breaks. Mogu takes up one end of it. As they are preparing for a new attack, Narjis enters from R. She is in a mean dress.*

NARJIS

O my Father!

MOGU

Hast thou been prudent, my Daughter? Hast thou brought any recompense from the treasury of the King?

NARJIS

O my Father, when word of the King's death came, I was plundered.

MOGU

And the slave girl whom I sent to you a while ago, Moon-of-Love, did she not warn you to bring some precious thing?

NARJIS

She took from me what had been left by the others, — my anklets and my rich dress.

MOGU

Wullahy! I have raised unto me those who are barren in enterprise!

ZAMM

Will you not go, Vagrants?

MOGU (*flourishing end of staff*)

I go, but not yet.

NARJIS

And I have not eaten, my Father.

MOGU

And I have such a feeling as tells me I shall be hungry in a while. I shall strike this one-eyed beggar on his blind side, drive him from this place and then beg from those who come this way.

[*He strikes Zamm with the end of the staff and knocks him down. Zamm picks himself up and retreats.*

ZAMM

I shall have you beaten, Mogu. I go to bring the ass-tenders against you. I go to get a whole staff.

[*He goes off.*

MOGU

Stand beside me, Narjis, and we shall beg from those who pass. None will refuse a coin to the Vizier reduced to beggary.

NARJIS

I will mourn a while for the King who is dead.

[*Mogu stands with hand outstretched; Narjis stands a little aside with her head bent and in a mourning attitude. As they stand thus, there pass in processional order: Roman soldiers, Artavades with the crown on his head,*

Pharanices, drunk, with his arm on the shoulder of one girl and beckoning to another girl who follows; Sparimixes in a rich, stiff dress with a high cap upon his head; Shedad and Shedid with their staffs in their hands; archers, banner-men and javelin throwers. Music during procession.

MOGU

There is not one from whom I could beg with safety.

[*Hafiz the Hashish-eater comes on after the procession.*

HAFIZ

O Mogu!

MOGU

It is the hashish-eater!

HAFIZ

What does your hashish say to you, Mogu?

MOGU

To-day I was the Vizier clad in cloth of gold, and I sat judging the case of kings. Now I go back to the desert, hungry and an outcast.

HAFIZ

You are my brother. I have also worn the diadem and been in the dust; the arms of the beautiful slave girls have been around me, and the sun has been on the stripes of my beating.

MOGU

Bestow a gift upon me, Hafiz.

HAFIZ

O Mogu, remember this.

MOGU

When, O Hafiz?

HAFIZ

In a thousand years you shall regain your power, and then I shall stand before you, and say "O my Lord,

grant that the women of a certain region be given to me as my slave women."

MOGU

The women of the region of Yemen — is it not so, O Hafiz?

HAFIZ

No. That was a thousand years ago. The women I desire live by the slow waters of the Zacahapla which is in the region of the Blue Nile. They have woven their huts of reeds. Without curtains they recline within, and the heart of the passer-by is made empty by desire. O my Lord, grant that the women of this region be my slave women.

MOGU

O Narjis, crave a coin from the hashish-eater!

[*Narjis, who has been standing in a mourning attitude, turns obediently. She holds out her hand, and Hafiz gives her a coin.*

NARJIS

Whither do we go, my Father?

MOGU

The way of the desert is before us. Hafiz, we go now.

HAFIZ

The hour of my sobriety approaches, but yet I would talk to you about these women. They call no man husband, and their lives are spent making love more subtle and beauty more elaborate. They think not of the afterworld of Heaven or Hell, for they are descended from Lilith and from Ridwan, an angel of Paradise.

MOGU

Give me the coin he gave. Now we go, Narjis. To-night we sleep in the dry bed of the river, and in the morning we eat in the town. (*They walk back towards*

the desert and they are seen for a while in the brilliant moonlight) Farewell Hafiz, Son of Illusion!

HAFIZ

Farewell, Mogu. Farewell for a thousand years!

[*He goes off towards R.*

CURTAIN

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Mogu, the wanderer.

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